SCHOOL EFFICIENCY MONOGRAPHS

# RURAL EDUCATION AND THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

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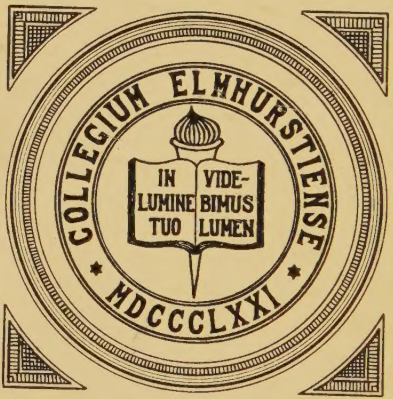


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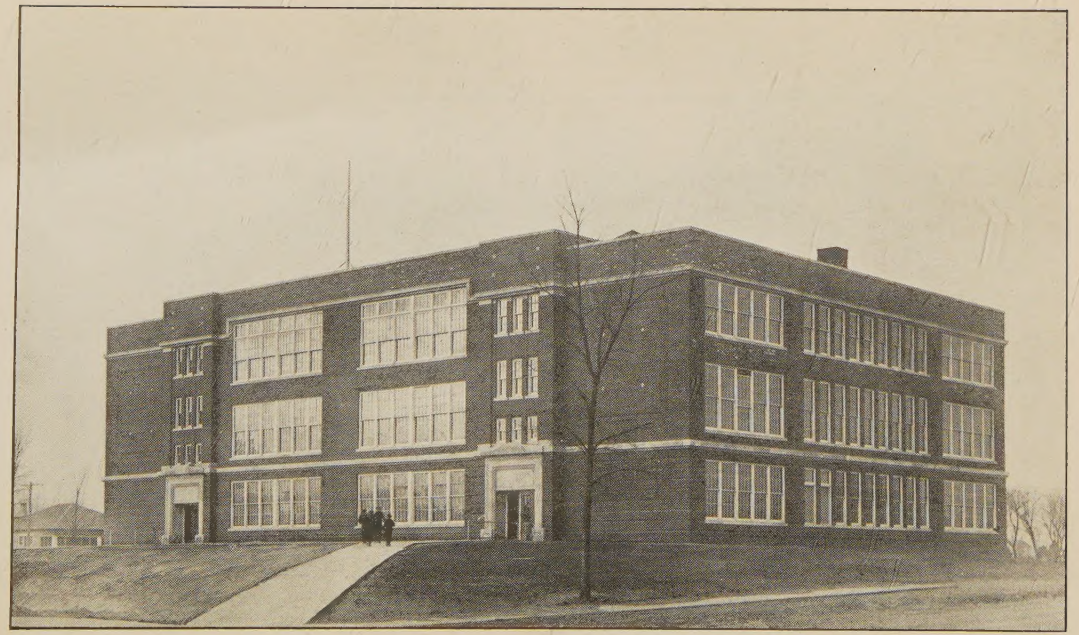

High school at Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, Iowa. This fine building, which cost $100,000, is the largest consolidated school building in Iowa. Seating capacity, not counting twelve recitation rooms, is about 550.

*SCHOOL EFFICIENCY MONOGRAPHS*

# RURAL EDUCATION AND THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

BY

JULIUS BERNHARD ARP
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS
JACKSON COUNTY, MINNESOTA

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TO THE MILLIONS OF COUNTRY BOYS AND GIRLS IN AMERICA, AND TO ALL WHO FEEL AN ABIDING INTEREST IN RURAL AMERICAN LIFE, THIS BOOK IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED

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# PREFACE

MUCH has been written of late concerning the Rural School Problem. All students of country life seem to agree that a radical readjustment of the entire rural educational and social system, to fit modern conditions, is imperative; but while a few of the leaders have hewn close to the vital spot, none so far have gone straight to the heart of the subject.

The author is convinced that the time has come when we must insist upon a full program of reconstruction from the ground up, and begin to build at once. The gist of the problem is to establish a new school in which the essentials of a modern education can be taught. The old school, as still found in over ninety per cent of the rural districts, does not lend itself to such a program; and no amount of repair, addition, varnish, or veneer will transform it into an efficient, modern institution. Rebuilding is absolutely essential.

Some friends of the rural school advocate comprehensive changes in the curriculum and justly demand that the training of country boys and girls shall culminate in a complete industrial and vocational education, adapted to twentieth-century life. They are agreed that rural teachers must measure up professionally and otherwise to their colleagues in our best school systems; they recognize that salaries paid must be adequate to insure high-class training and instruction; and yet — they fail to see that these things are impossible in an obsolete school system in which the first elements of success are wanting.

The one-room school must go. It cannot provide the education to which country boys and girls are entitled and which the welfare of the country demands. Contrary to some excellent authorities on rural schools who have given

the matter careful consideration, but who have overrated the obstacles to consolidation, it is quite probable that at least eighty per cent of all the country schools can be reconstructed to meet the new demands and that all but twenty per cent of the one-room schools can be merged into high-class, graded, consolidated schools. Abundant proof is available in every state today, showing that supposed obstacles to this revolutionary change have existed largely in the minds of the rural people. The immediate and paramount duty of every leader in rural education, therefore, is to clarify the public mind on the subject and compel attention and unbiased consideration. Progress in consolidation is now so rapid and so uniformly successful, and its blessings are so obvious, that rural teachers and superintendents alike should become enthusiastic disciples of the new school.

Absolute faith in the idea and efficacy of consolidation is preëminently the message of this little volume. If the criticism of the present rural school system herein expressed will be received in the same kindly spirit in which it is offered, the book's mission has been accomplished. May it receive and merit the careful reading and consideration, not alone of rural teachers, superintendents, supervisors, and students of rural education, but of that vast body of American farmers of whose very life, thoughts, and ideals it endeavors to treat candidly, fearlessly, and sympathetically.

Grateful acknowledgment is hereby made to the several state departments of education, county superintendents, teachers, and friends who have given valuable information, suggestions, and criticism, especially to Superintendent Lee L. Driver of Indiana and Mr. J. C. Muerman, specialist in rural education, United States Bureau of Education.

J. B. Arp

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# RURAL EDUCATION AND THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

# RURAL EDUCATION AND THE CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL

## CHAPTER ONE

### Rural Education and Rural Life

"WHAT the best and wisest parent wants for his own child, that must the community want for all its children. Any other ideal for our schools is narrow and unlovely. Acted upon, it destroys our democracy." [1]

This beautiful conception of the mission of the public school as expressed by Dr. Dewey is a worthy ideal to place before the American people; but to educate all the people of a democracy to a full realization of such a standard, and a desire for it, would be little short of reaching the millennium. We may well set it up as a beacon light for the nation; but let us not deceive ourselves by thinking that it is a goal within easy reach. The best we can hope for is to keep the road to this ideal open for all the people, and the best we can do is to strive to increase the number of citizens sufficiently intelligent and eager to want such an education for themselves and their children. Meanwhile, the number who actually reach the higher level in our educational system is, and will continue to be, comparatively small. Our school problem, therefore, is not so much to take care of the favored ten per cent at the top of the educational ladder as to minister to the ninety per cent struggling below. In so far as we succeed in providing an adequate education for this overwhelming majority — an education that shall be practical, sane,

Education and democracy

[1] Dewey, *The School and Society* (University of Chicago Press), page 19.

and well rounded — and in so far as we succeed in placing it within the reach of all the children of all the people, in just so far shall we make our country a democracy in fact as well as in name.

That, at present, we are far from this essential condition of a true democracy, no one who is familiar with our public school system, or its product, will attempt to deny. Misconceptions, inequalities, and defects are found in the best-conducted school systems of the nation, when measured by the test of real democracy; but there is no defect more glaring today than the inequality that exists between the educational facilities of the urban and the rural communities. Rural education in the United States has been so far outstripped by the education of our urban centers that, from an educational standpoint, the country child is left far behind in the struggle of life. It will take the wisest educational leadership of the present to remove this serious menace and avert ultimate disaster to the rural population. The greatest educational problem now facing the American people is the Rural School Problem. It must be solved, and it must be solved by the friends of the rural school who understand its needs.

Some factors to be considered

The social, economic, and industrial changes of the last fifty years have been marvelous indeed. Agricultural methods had been slowly improving since ancient times, but of late progress has been so rapid that many have failed to grasp its significance and its bearing upon life and society. Consider for a moment certain facts. In the time of Nero, with the crude tools at his command a Roman slave spent the equivalent of three days of irksome toil to produce a bushel of wheat. With more modern agricultural appliances, in the days of Abraham Lincoln,

it was possible for the farmer to accomplish this feat in three hours. Today, thanks to the genius of the McCormicks, Stephensons, Fords, and other master minds, with the aid of binders, steam threshers, gas tractors, and quick communication, the same work may be done by one man in less than ten minutes! With such strides in the cheap and rapid production of foods and other agricultural products, significant changes and readjustments have taken place. The ability to supply necessities of life cheaply and in abundance has caused a marked shifting of population from country to city, and from an agrarian people with simple habits we have become, in large measure, an urban people with a highly complex social and industrial life.

Furthermore, prosperity has given rise to leisure, and leisure has been followed by spiritual improvement, comforts, and pleasures. The effect of all this has been felt more quickly in the city than in the country. The reason is that city life is adapted to teamwork and demands it, while the more or less isolated life of the rural community tends toward conservatism, individualism, and fixed habits of thought and action. Rural people have, therefore, been as tenacious in resisting changes as city people have been willing and eager to adopt them. Consequently, an unfortunate line of cleavage between the two has created a class distinction threatening the future welfare and tranquillity of our commonwealth.

In a land of freedom which boasts of equal opportunity for all, it is unthinkable that any pronounced and abiding privileges shall be enjoyed by one class of citizens and denied to another, whether such distinction be due to economic, social, educational, or other conditions. The constant aim of a true democracy should be to reduce distinctions and privileges to the minimum, and to seek

the welfare and happiness of all the people, in all walks of life, at all times, in all circumstances, with equal care, solicitude, and justice. To do this requires the wise leadership of men and women who are devoted to the principles and the spirit of democracy and brotherhood. Especially are such leaders needed in the training of the young, from whose ranks the citizenship of a nation is constantly recruited. Whenever we differentiate greatly between the education of boys and girls in the country and those in the city, we are in danger of engendering class distinctions, castes, and social strata that work dissension and strife. Rural life and rural education are at present suffering from lack of real leadership, and the country boys and girls of America are not getting a square deal. While the education of the urban child has kept pace with the progress of the age, that of the country child is still primitive and inadequate. Why is this?

**Origin and weakness of rural school system**

To get a clear conception of the rural school problem, its history must be understood. "The little red schoolhouse" of bygone days, that played so prominent a part in pioneer life, has been lauded in song and story and has won for itself a place in the hearts and affection of the common people. It had a unique setting, was peculiarly an American institution, and was a distinct adjunct to pioneer rural life. In Europe, particularly in western Europe, the rural population is concentrated in villages; and just as its social life is the group life, so its school system is the graded system. One-teacher schools are established only where the number of pupils is not sufficient for a graded school, and where they do exist, they are put in charge of mature, forceful teachers, equal in training and ability to those in similar grades of the larger systems. Quite the reverse is true in America,

and the explanation is found in the conditions attending the settlement of the country.

In very early colonial days, the danger of attack by hostile Indians, the weakness of the individual settlements, and the necessity for coöperation, all compelled people to live in close proximity to one another and thus build up villages and towns; but soon afterwards the sturdy American pioneer pushed on fearlessly and single-handed into the wilderness of forest and plain. There he settled, either upon his "clearing" or upon his prairie claim, often separated by many miles from his neighbors and friends. Under such conditions the number of children found in any community was seldom large enough to form a permanent school in a definite spot. Moreover, the majority of the early settlers, being poor, had to struggle hard for the bare necessities of life. Consequently, school terms were short, attendance was low, and teachers were miserably paid and poorly qualified for the work. The whole school was crude and primitive in the extreme, but as life in those days was exceedingly simple, in both the open country and in the towns, and school work did not go far beyond the "three R's," a school of this kind served the needs of the people fairly well. Its fundamental defects were not recognized until much later, when the children trained in such schools faced the altered, complex life of a modern community.

As long as towns were mere hamlets, similar in manner of life to the open country and with school systems but slightly graded or slightly different from the typical rural school, the discrepancy between village and rural schools was not striking. Later, however, when villages and cities grew rapidly, they developed not only first-class graded elementary schools, but secondary schools as well. Meanwhile the one-room country schools con-

tinued as before and became so firmly rooted in our great agricultural sections that nothing short of heroic effort could convince the rural communities of the inherent shortcomings of this school system. Custom, with a grip of steel, held to the original conception of this school, though in the external and minor details it changed somewhat. The little log schoolhouse had been replaced by the little red schoolhouse, and this, in turn, had been painted white or some other color. It was also a little more spacious and pretentious, but its essential nature had not been altered in the least. To win the approval of the patrons, three requirements had to be met: (1) it must be within walking distance of every home, (2) it must be subject to local control, and (3) it must be a one-room school. Any departure from this ideal was viewed with suspicion and alarm. To break away now from a system so firmly established and so widely distributed over the country is a task that has tried, and will continue to try, the souls and patience of consecrated men and women; but it must be accomplished in order to redeem the rural school from stagnation and inefficiency, and to save rural life from monotony and worse social ills.

Education and life are firmly knit together. The more closely they articulate, the better for the people. As long as country life was primitive and simple, there was little need for technical, specialized, or so-called higher education. A thorough training in the "three R's" and sound instruction in morality and the principles of democracy sufficed for the limited needs of the time. Thus equipped, a man could cope successfully with his fellows in the race of life; and where, a generation or two ago, these schools were placed in charge of strong and virile young men, they served their purpose admirably. But with the highly complex

Why the one-room school is inefficient

social organizations of modern times, the country school with one teacher is entirely inadequate to meet the demand for technical skill, or to lay the foundation for a successful life. Its inefficiency is due, however, to a totally different condition of life and society rather than to a poorer teaching force. On the whole, the rural teacher of today is greatly superior to the pedagogue of fifty or even of twenty-five years ago, although it is to be regretted that the low salaries paid and the insecure tenure of the position do not warrant young men of ability in entering the ranks. The majority of the country teachers now have a better academic and professional training than their predecessors. They are more mature when entering the service, and they labor under more favorable environments. Buildings, equipment, and books are vastly better than formerly, and our teachers are not lacking in energy, diligence, devotion, and eagerness to succeed, nor in a proper conception of their duty. They are simply facing a task so tremendous that no man or woman can master the situation until the rural school has undergone a complete transformation.

Little by little we have added subjects to the rural school curriculum until the country teacher is now expected to train her pupils thoroughly in the following studies: reading, writing, drawing, spelling, arithmetic, language, geography, history, grammar, music, physiology and hygiene, civil government, agriculture, domestic arts, manual training, and kindred industrial subjects. Moreover, many of these must be subdivided to fit the various ages and grades of the pupils who attend the one-room school. Consequently, the daily program of the average country teacher is loaded down with twenty-five to thirty-five daily recitations which cover the entire field of primary, intermediate, and grammar grade work.

It would take a person with an iron constitution, and one endowed with a wonderful adaptability, to handle a range of subjects from the kindergarten to the high school with any degree of success. Even if one could endure the physical strain of such a task, time is lacking to hear the recitations properly, supervised study is out of the question, and intensive work along any line becomes a mere dream.

The problem confronting the rural teacher is a problem of the division of labor. The system is at fault and must be reorganized until every rural school, not absolutely isolated by the physical conditions or topography of the country, shall become a part of a larger school system, having a graded school of more than one teacher — in brief, a centralized or consolidated school.

Not until President Roosevelt appointed the Country Life Commission and its comprehensive report was given such wide publicity, did the country realize that a nation-wide crisis existed in rural-life conditions. He struck the keynote of the situation himself when he said, in making the appointment, "Good crops are of little value to the farmer unless they open up the door to a good kind of life on the farm." In other words, the human interest transcends the material. Men are worth more than money, and a happy home is more to be desired than silver and gold.

**Need of a better school system**

Judging from government reports, the American farmer was at that time apparently on the highroad to success, and his financial status was good. The wealth of the farms was measured in billions of dollars; crop yields — at least in the aggregate — were on the increase; and labor-saving machinery had taken away some of the drudgery and had made farming more profitable than ever before. But when the report of this commission

laid bare the real conditions in which the American farmer, in too many cases, was compelled to live and raise his family, it was both a revelation and a shock to the people. From every corner of the land echoed and reëchoed the voice of the reformer, and platform, pulpit, and press let loose a flood of suggestions — good, bad, and indifferent — for the improvement of rural life. Newspaper men and magazine writers penned elaborate articles on the newly coined catch phrase, "Back-to-the-farm," and offered scores of visionary schemes for relieving a bad situation. In the minds of the novices was a hazy picture showing the arrested influx of people from the country to the city, a counter current started from the city to the country, and the unemployed of the congested urban centers made over, in some miraculous manner, into successful and contented farmers.

The superficial nature of this view of the problem was soon exposed by those who had given the matter earnest and thoughtful attention. A careful analysis of the report left no doubt that the remedy lay in another direction and called for a redirected rural life. It also made the two chief causes of the cityward movement stand out in bold relief; namely, (1) an unsatisfactory social life, and (2) an antiquated and inefficient rural school system. Fully four out of every five persons who gave their reasons for leaving the farm and moving to the city, laid the blame at the door of the rural school. This indictment has since challenged the attention of men and women everywhere. Can any one seriously defend a school system of today which offers to the rural people (who compose nearly fifty per cent of the entire population) nothing more than an eighth-grade education, with a school term so short and other conditions so unfavorable that seventy-five per cent of the twelve million American

country school children do not complete the work of the grades? Is such a system in keeping with the demands of our twentieth-century civilization?

O. J. Kern, in his book, *Among Country Schools*, observes: "If I were to formulate an educational creed for the country school, it would contain but two articles; namely, (1) the country child is entitled to every whit as good an education as that enjoyed by the most favored child attending the American public school; (2) to secure this right for the country child, the country people must expend more money on the country child and expend it in a better way." Likewise, Professor Ellwood P. Cubberley says, in his *Rural Life and Education:* "About one half of the school children of the United States are enrolled in the rural schools, and perhaps ninety per cent of the children of the rural population receive no other education. That the education provided for such children is what it ought to be, or might easily be made to be, few will maintain. Rural children are entitled to something better." Similar thoughts are now expressed by scores of the best educators of the nation; and hopeful signs of an awakening in rural districts lead one to believe that the dawn of a better day for the education of country boys and girls is at hand.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Rural Readjustments

IN the final analysis, all animal life, including the human, is dependent upon plant life for its existence; and very early in the history of the race man came face to face with the problem of supplementing nature's store of plant food by systematic tilling of the land and crop production. Not until the race knew how to get a living from the soil with some degree of certainty, by cultivating plants to feed both man and beast, could habitations be fixed, governments be permanently established, and civilization take shape. Nor were leisure, improvement of the mind, and a higher level of life possible until food was produced in abundance and the struggle for existence became less acute. The plow has broken the ground for civilization; without the perfection and multiplication of farm tools in modern times, our twentieth-century culture would have been impossible. Behind all the progress of man, lies the unfolding and the unfolded agriculture of the ages.

The importance of agriculture

Fortunate, indeed, is the land that is blessed with broad and fertile fields which furnish ample stores of food, clothing, and shelter for its people. The lack of these has for generations menaced the very existence of less favored nations, and looms like a dark cloud on the horizon of a thickly populated country whenever the arteries of trade are clogged by war or other obstruction. The acute shortage of food which prevailed throughout the leading nations of Europe beginning with the third year of the great world war, when each party to the struggle resorted to a relentless blockade of the enemy's coasts and frontiers, is a vivid illustration of the importance of agricultural resources to any land. Another

Striking illustrations

modern example where a nation's food supply was seriously threatened for want of agricultural lands occurred recently in Japan. Its population had increased very rapidly after the empire threw open its doors to the world; and by 1908 Japan had a population of more than 49,000,000, or 336 people to the square mile. Since a large part of the islands is unfit for agriculture, the average holding of land per family was but two and one half acres. This was not sufficient to feed its people, and unless the importation of foodstuffs could be relied upon, Japan faced the alternative of seeing some of her citizens starve or of finding an outlet for her surplus population. This finally culminated in the annexation of Korea and was the basic reason for the Russo-Japanese War.[1] Whatever else may be the duties of a government toward its people, the first and primary duty is to feed, clothe, and shelter them.

Our own agricultural wealth and fertile farming lands have in the past seemed so abundant that we have been extremely wasteful in the production of crops and lavish in the distribution of rich farm lands at almost nominal prices. This God-given heritage we have continued to exploit by a system of soil robbery until, with the swift changes of the last two decades, serious consequences are beginning to threaten. To the superficial observer it must indeed seem strange that a country capable of producing during the season of 1916 more than five billion dollars' worth of wealth from its four principal crops — corn, cotton, wheat, and hay — and increasing that yield to the enormous total of over eight billion dollars during the season of 1917, the first year of our war against Germany, should be concerned about supplying its own population. But if the present rate of increase of city people over country people continues, the American farmer must

[1] See Alfred Stead's *Japan by the Japanese.* Dodd, Mead & Co., 1904.

change his methods and largely increase his production per acre, or fail to raise sufficient food for the nation.[1]

The United States is now without a rival in the production of food supplies, but it is far from being an efficient agricultural country. To make such a claim, her farmers should be able, with more intensive cultivation and a fully developed scientific agriculture, to double, or even treble, the nation's agricultural production of today. This is

[1] STATISTICS COVERING A FEW OF THE LEADING FARM PRODUCTS OF THE UNITED STATES AS ESTIMATED BY THE SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

FOR THE SEASON OF 1916

| PRODUCT | TOTAL PRODUCTION (BUSHELS) | AVERAGE YIELD PER ACRE | AVERAGE PRICE PER BUSHEL ON DECEMBER 1 | TOTAL VALUE BASED ON PRICE OF DECEMBER 1, 1916 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corn . . . | 2,583,241,000 | 24.4 bu. | $.889 | $2,295,783,000 |
| Wheat . . . | 639,886,000 | 12.1 bu. | 1.693 | 1,025,765,000 |
| Oats . . . . | 1,251,992,000 | 30.1 bu. | .524 | 656,179,000 |
| Potatoes . . | 285,437,000 | 80.4 bu. | 1.461 | 417,063,000 |
| Barley . . . | 180,927,000 | 23.6 bu. | .882 | 159,534,000 |
| Hay . . . . | 89,991,000 tons | 1.64 tons | 11.21 per T. | 1,008,894,000 |
| Cotton . . . | 11,511,000 bales | 156.3 lb. | .196 per lb. | 1,080,000,000 |

FOR THE SEASON OF 1917

| PRODUCT | TOTAL PRODUCTION (BUSHELS) | AVERAGE YIELD PER ACRE | AVERAGE PRICE PER BUSHEL ON DECEMBER 1 | TOTAL VALUE BASED ON PRICE OF DECEMBER 1, 1917 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Corn . . . | 3,159,494,000 | 26.4 bu. | $1.283 | $4,053,672,000 |
| Wheat . . . | 650,828,000 | 14.2 bu. | 2.009 | 1,307,418,000 |
| Oats . . . . | 1,587,286,000 | 36.4 bu. | .669 | 1,061,427,000 |
| Potatoes . . | 442,356,000 | 100.8 bu. | 1.229 | 543,865,000 |
| Barley . . . | 208,975,000 | 23.7 bu. | 1.137 | 237,539,000 |
| Hay . . . . | 95,030,000 tons | 1.22 tons | 16.50 per T. | 1,567,325,000 |
| Cotton . . . | 10,949,000 bales | 155.7 lb. | .277 per lb. | 1,451,819,000 |
| Beans . . . (six states) | 15,701,000 bu. | 8.6 bu. | 6.52 per bu. | 102,426,000 |

not only possible, but may even be accomplished in the next generation. The startling revelations about a world shortage of food supplies soon after we entered the war in the spring of 1917, and the appeal that came to us from the Allies across the Atlantic, were but powerful reminders to the American people that this country was regarded as the granary of the world and the savior of hungry and starving Europe at that critical time. More important still was the lesson it taught us that, as a permanent food producer, America must be aroused to the urgent and immediate need of modern scientific, intensive, and efficient farming, both in war and in peace.

Professor Cubberley, in his *Rural Life and Education*, has divided American country life into four general periods, each of which differed markedly from the others. The first was the period of the pioneer, extending from colonial days until 1830; the second was the period of transformation and expansion, between the years 1830 and 1860; the third period, from 1860 to 1890, was characterized as that of the home builder; and the fourth may be termed the period of commercial farming, accompanied in certain sections by a rapid increase in tenantry. This last period extends from 1890 to the present day, and its latest aspects are scientific agriculture and social coöperation.

Changes in rural conditions

In a somewhat similar classification Dr. Warren H. Wilson [1] divides the American country community into the periods of the Pioneer, the Land Farmer, the Exploiter, and the Husbandman. Of these he says in substance:

The Pioneer lived alone from choice. "He placed his cabin without regard to social experiences, and self-preservation was the struggle of his life." He hunted, plowed, harvested, reared his family, lived, and died alone.

[1] *The Evolution of the Country Community.* Pilgrim Press, 1912.

"The Land Farmer was the typical American countryman who succeeded the Pioneer, swarmed over the country, and sought everywhere the first values of a virgin soil. His ambition was to make his own farm and his own family group prosperous without regard to neighbors or community. The Land Farmer had no idea of community prosperity."

The Exploiter has been designated as "the tuberculosis of American farm life." He was not a farmer or a tiller of the soil, but a land speculator, bent on frequent buying and selling of land, "bulling the market and living on the unearned increment of farm lands." Next to the saloon keeper, the Exploiter has perhaps been the greatest single factor in the increase of poverty and the creation of slums, both rural and urban.

The Husbandman was the last to come on the scene. He is the scientific farmer, wedded to the soil, a home builder and a community builder as well. He is not only a scientific producer, but a scientific manager. He has the larger view of community life, happiness, coöperation, prosperity, education, citizenship, and personal worth. He is the future American farmer.

The changes in American rural life during the four periods just mentioned were most profound and have, in the aggregate, produced effects little short of an agricultural revolution. Especially striking are the following: (1) the shifting of population from rural sections to urban centers, (2) an altered rural social life, and (3) an economic evolution. In 1790, only about three persons in a hundred lived in a city of eight thousand inhabitants or more; and such cities were less "urban" in those days than places of a thousand inhabitants are today. Ten years later, in 1800, only 4 per cent of the people were urban and 96 per cent were rural; nor did

Meaning of these changes

this ratio change much until 1830. By 1880, however, the city population had increased to 29.5 per cent, and by 1910 to 46.3 per cent of the total population, while the rural population had correspondingly decreased from 70.5 per cent to 53.7 per cent, with the movement still continuing in the same direction. More astonishing still is the fact, based on the above figures, that while in 1880 about 44.4 per cent of the population were actual producers and feeding the remaining 55.6 per cent of non-producers, in 1910 only 32.9 per cent were engaged in feeding the remaining 67.1 per cent.[1]

In spite of these statistics we have been slow to take warning of the approaching danger lurking in an insufficient food supply, and our wasteful farming methods have gone merrily on. In the decade from 1900 to 1910, the United States produced but an average of 14.1 bushels of wheat per acre, on land that had been farmed less than a century, while Germany produced 28.9 bushels and the United Kingdom 33.1 bushels per acre, on land that had been cultivated for a thousand years or more. Under still greater pressure of population the Chinese get even larger returns than the Germans or the English; and they get them from soil that has been cultivated for four thousand years. Mrs. F. H. King, in her book, *Farmers of Forty Centuries*, reports a case where a Chinaman supported himself, his wife, ten children, a donkey, a cow, and two pigs from a farm of two and a half acres. Fancy an Anglo-Saxon accomplishing this feat on a farm of ten acres!

**The drift to urban centers**

The shifting of population is not difficult to understand. Previous to 1830, farming operations were primitive and called for the labor of many hands. Owing to slow and costly methods of transportation, both commerce and manufacturing were in their infancy

[1] See Lapp and Mote's *Learning to Earn*, for further details.

and there was no incentive for city building. Consequently, only twenty-six cities in the United States had a population of eight thousand or more by 1830, and fourteen of these had less than twelve thousand each. But with the advent of railroad building and improved farm machinery during the period from 1830 to 1860, crop production increased enormously, cities sprang up as if by magic, foreign markets opened up because of cheap transportation, and commercial farming became profitable. Not only did the new industries begin to draw farmers into the cities and towns, but the improved farm machinery actually made it possible to produce the increased crops with less farm labor than before, and the cityward migration started in earnest.

Somewhat later, especially during the eighties, a temporary overproduction of farm crops and consequent drop in prices greatly accelerated the movement. At the same time, a steady stream of wide-awake, energetic, and ambitious young farmers flowed to the cities, lured by the new, strange, and fascinating life and the tales of fortune and business successes of former neighbors and friends. These men were usually replaced by a much inferior or totally different class of farmers or farm hands, to the detriment of the rural community. A similar effect was produced by the migration of a class of older, intelligent farmers who had grown sufficiently wealthy to afford greater comfort to their families and better educational facilities for their children than the country school provided. They seldom disposed of their farms, however, but rented them to an indifferent and poorer class of tenants, and thus further impoverished the rural social life.

Still another factor in this movement was the rapid rise in the price of farm lands, which made the buying of farms a safe and attractive investment, and men of means began

to buy up land or enlarge their holdings of rented farms, so that the number of farms in many states was actually decreased while the average size of the farms was materially increased.

Accordingly, the four great agricultural states of Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, and Missouri suffered a decrease in rural population during the decade from 1900 to 1910, while a dozen others had an increase of less than ten per cent. At the same time, the city population in all these states grew by leaps and bounds

These altered conditions naturally made great changes in the social life of the farmers. The struggle, hardship, unremitting toil, and loneliness of the pioneer severely tested the courage and endurance of men and women and left but little time or opportunity for culture and refinement; but their manner of life was conducive to uprightness, honesty, integrity, morality, and strict attention to duty. They were a sturdy, self-reliant, and independent class of people, well fitted to cope with the dangers and privations of pioneer days. Amusements were few and simple, and of leisure there was none worth mentioning.

**Effect on social life**

But with the introduction of labor-saving machinery these harsh conditions quickly gave way to better homes, comforts, improved roads, leisure, and pleasures; and country life in the period just preceding the great cityward movement was quite pleasant and agreeable. Until then, the better farming regions were settled largely by a homogeneous and intelligent American population, cherishing common aims and ideals, and mingling freely in social functions and community gatherings. The rural church had strength and virility, and it trained both young and old in acts of courtesy, loyalty, respect, and obedience. Its denominational zeal had a tendency to make people

aggressive, emotional, and strongly individualistic, so that leadership was not wanting and rural life was far from being monotonous. A close second to the country church in those days as a community institution was the country school, where granges, debating societies, literary clubs, political gatherings, and other neighborhood activities brought people together frequently in pleasant intercourse.

The cityward movement, however, wrought havoc among these conditions. In the first place, it took from the farm men and women of the best type and replaced them with others having lower standards or with foreign immigrants of the less desirable classes, whose customs, ideals, and habits of life differed greatly from our own; and, in the second place, it resulted in substituting tenant farmers for resident owners at an alarming rate. According to government statistics, the percentage of tenant farmers in the United States in 1880 was 25.6 per cent of the total number. It was 28.4 per cent in 1890, 35.3 per cent in 1900, and 37 per cent in 1910, and is still on the increase. In typical Southern states like Georgia and Alabama, the tenant farmers already outnumber the resident owners, and they are rapidly gaining on the resident freeholders in states like Ohio, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and others in the rich agricultural Mississippi Valley. In the extreme East and the newer states of the West, tenant farmers are less numerous than elsewhere.

There has also been a notable change in the later foreign tenants. Formerly, the European immigrants who settled in rural American communities came mostly from the intelligent and desirable races of northern and northwestern Europe. They had much in common with our people and readily adopted American standards and customs; but in these latter days our foreign tenants have come largely from the poorer and less educated class of southern Europe.

Their coming has complicated the rural problem immensely because they have little in common with the Anglo-Saxon race and are slow to conform to American manners of life. Owing to the diversity of unassimilated nationalities and the conflicting elements in rural communities of today, social solidarity has been impaired and community institutions have lost their prestige. In thousands of places the rural church is suffering from non-support, stagnation, and decay; and the rural school has also been most seriously affected. Efficient rural leadership is at a premium, although it is of first importance in redeeming American country life from its present social and educational ills. This phase of the problem will be fully treated in subsequent chapters.

The economic evolution of the American farmer forms a remarkable chapter in our national history. From the want and privations of early days, the farmer first rose to a life of reasonable returns for his labor, then to the enjoyment of snug profits, and finally to economic independence and affluence. The unhealthy feature of this success has been the enormous increase in the price of farm land, from which source the wealth of the farmers has mostly been derived. High-priced farm land has now become a distinct menace to the future farmer of moderate means, since it makes farm ownership difficult for those who are not wealthy; and ownership of land has been throughout all ages looked upon as "the poor man's rock of defense." Unreasonable land values tend to concentrate the holdings in the hands of a few rich landlords; threaten the actual worker of the land with unjust and high rents; aggravate "the high cost of living"; and foster the obnoxious European system of absentee landlords and indifferent, malcontent tenants. Every true friend of democracy and every lover of American freedom should

**The economic evolution**

lend his counsel and aid to correct this vicious tendency. Here is a distinct call to the country teachers and the country schools for enlightenment, efficiency, and intelligent social service. The case reminds us of Goldsmith's ominous but prophetic lines in *The Deserted Village:*

> Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
> Where wealth accumulates, and men decay.
> Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
> A breath can make them, as a breath hath made;
> But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
> When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

We must emphasize two immediate and pressing needs; namely, a new social life and a new agricultural education. Socially and morally, we must set for the country people a higher and better standard of living. Not only do we need sober, industrious, and honest farmers; but we must turn a prevailing cold, calculating, dollar-getting, and prosaic attitude into an intelligent, sympathetic, alert, and eager desire for a better kind of country life. The farmers should share with their city cousins the benefits and blessings of government and democracy, since they share their duties and tasks. They have too long been content with less education and enlightenment for themselves and their children as compared with city people, and have made poor use of their leisure hours. Wholesome recreation, organized play, and community amusements must replace some of the coarse and questionable pastimes. They are the best antidote for monotonous rounds of duty and uncongenial neighbors. Grown-ups and children alike must join in this and keep the fires of community coöperation burning. Every township needs a community center — preferably a central school building with ample grounds and equipment for social service — to minister to both the

**Fundamental, present needs of rural America**

educational and the social needs of the patrons and make life in the country delightful and profitable.

Rural orchestras, bands, literary societies, athletic associations, clubs, and other organizations are not only feasible but comparatively easy to maintain in country communities. When judiciously handled, things like these will transform a dead and indifferent country district into a happy, bustling, progressive, and pleasant place. They turn men's minds from thoughts of money-making to the real joys of living.

The most potent influence in bringing about the changes just outlined will be the redirected country school of the future. The description of this school we shall take up later, but will say in passing that when fully developed, it will be an institution worthy of the support of all and will be the greatest single asset of the community. In such a school we shall train the farmer boys and girls to lives of usefulness, appreciation of their work, and the understanding of scientific principles and practical needs of their chosen occupation. Its teaching will be in harmony with the beauties of God's great out-of-doors, the best in literature and art, culture and refinement, and the nobler aims of life. It will be a school with a program, a purpose, and a message.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Rural School Administration

THREE great dead-weights that hang like millstones from the neck of rural school progress are: (1) the lack of real, professional supervision; (2) the small, district unit of taxation; and (3) the untrained teacher. Of these evils, the first two are the natural outgrowth of our rural school system as evolved in connection with the settlement and agricultural development of the country. They fastened themselves upon an unsuspecting public until they became so firmly imbedded as part and parcel of the whole scheme that it is almost impossible to shake them off. Students of rural education are a unit, however, in saying that both supervision and organization must undergo a radical change if the country school system is to come into its own; and there is no doubt that with a new type of supervision and a better unit of organization, the untrained teacher would quickly disappear. The securing of strong, professional, and efficient superintendents for all county school systems should be the immediate concern of every state. It is the first step in the betterment of rural schools. Without the leadership of high-minded, devoted, and trained men and women, progress will be sporadic and slow; but with it, improvement will be swift and sure.

Barriers to progress

To get the right perspective of the typical county superintendent of schools in America, one must cross the Appalachian Mountains and look about in the Mississippi Valley, or beyond. When Congress carved out of the Northwest Territory the states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and others, it set aside one section of land in each township as an aid to public education. From the

income of this land was to be created a school fund to assist such states in the maintenance of their public school systems. In order to handle the money thus received and allotted to each county for school purposes, and to apportion the same to the various school districts of the county, Illinois chose a suitable person in each county to perform that duty. Since at first the work of the office was entirely clerical and financial, the most natural way of selecting such an official was to elect him by popular vote, as in the case of other county officers. But the apportionment of school money and the keeping of a record of the same was a comparatively easy task and left this person with time hanging heavy on his hands, so that succeeding legislatures added "other duties" to the office. Among these were the following: visiting schools, examining and licensing teachers, collecting statistical information and reporting the same to the state superintendent, holding teachers' institutes, etc. By degrees, therefore, the duties of the county superintendent of schools, as he was called, became very largely professional instead of clerical; but the method of electing him remained the same.

**The county superintendent an elected official**

Since the only qualifications fixed for other county officers were that they must be resident, qualified voters of the county, the same qualifications naturally held good for the county superintendent. Thus arose the highly ridiculous and almost tragic anomaly of requiring no educational qualifications whatsoever of candidates for county superintendent of schools, while the teachers whom they supervised and upon whose qualifications they passed judgment were not allowed to teach in the poorest school of the county without first submitting proof of at least some educational and professional quali-

fications. It was small wonder, therefore, that the office of county superintendent became the football of political chicanery; and, frequently, religious affiliation, nationality, sympathy, partisanship, or some other extraneous or local consideration decided the election of the county superintendent, rather than education, fitness, or experience in the work.

The example having thus been set by some of the states in this region, the plan was readily copied by neighboring states like Iowa, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska, and others. Consequently, we have at the present time twenty-eight states, out of a total of forty-one states in the Union which have by law provided for county superintendents of schools, that choose these guardians of public education by popular vote. They usually expect the candidates to make a political canvass for the job, stump the county for both primary nomination and general election, pay political assessments, issue campaign literature, and repeat this performance every two or four years in order to retain their positions.

It is true that some states have tried to improve upon this method of selection by placing at least some educational qualifications upon the candidates for the office; but even this modification has done little to raise the standard of county superintendents in such states. The viciousness of the system lies in the political election. The people of a county are asked to fill a highly technical and professional position by popular vote when the individual voter can have no opportunity of examining into the real fitness and merits of the candidates. Obviously, the county superintendent should be chosen by a small board of school officers, selected from the county at large, which has ample time and opportunity to examine carefully into the character, fitness, education, and general

qualifications of each candidate for the office. The person so selected should then be held responsible to this board for results.

Popular election of county superintendents has proved to be a failure everywhere, but it remained for the two states of South Dakota and Washington to cap the climax in this method by providing that it should be unlawful or unconstitutional for a county superintendent to serve more than two consecutive terms in any one county. An office, therefore, which should be bestowed only upon a person who has made long and adequate preparation for the position and who has entered upon his career with the express purpose of making it his life work, automatically becomes the educational graveyard of every county superintendent in those states at the end of four years. It seems incredible that the intelligent electorate of a great state should ever place a law of that kind upon its statute books or disgrace its constitution with such a provision; but these are cold facts, and meanwhile thousands of innocent country boys and girls must suffer the consequences of such measures. This is not mere folly: it is asininity sublime.

If rural people are ever going to secure the services of professional county superintendents, a different method of choosing them must be provided. As in the case of city superintendents, they should be selected entirely upon merit, training, experience, and without regard to county or state lines. Political considerations must be completely wiped out. The choice should preferably be vested in a small county board of education, consisting of from three to six members who are in sympathy with rural life and education. This board should have general oversight of all country schools in the county and should be clothed with legal authority

**The remedy**

to enforce all reasonable rules and regulations for the building up of an efficient county school system. It should elect the county superintendent for a term of years, fix his salary, audit and allow reasonable traveling expenses of himself and his assistants, equip the office for prompt and effective service, confer upon him broad powers of supervision and administration, and then hold him strictly responsible for results. In short, this board should sustain to the county superintendent practically the same relation which the city board of education sustains to the city superintendent. High-class leadership is the soul of every well-regulated school system, and such leadership cannot ordinarily be obtained or retained under the old elective system. Men and women of ability and vision will soon lift a county school system out of its ruts, but to do so they must first be lifted out of the mire of petty partisan politics themselves and placed upon a high level of professional standing.

Happily, a number of states that do not elect their county superintendents by popular vote offer a variety of methods for choosing such officials. In Delaware they are appointed by the governor. In New Jersey they are appointed by the state commissioner of education and approved by the state board of education. Virginia and Nevada have so-called "division superintendents," chosen by state boards of education. A "division" in Nevada may contain from one to six counties, while those in Virginia consist of one or two counties each. New York has a system of supervisory districts whose superintendents are chosen for a term of five years by the district boards. Only four of these districts comprise an entire county; all others are but parts of counties. Pennsylvania elects its county superintendents by a board of school officers in convention

Straws showing the direction of the educational wind

assembled; and in the following states they are chosen by county boards of education, varying in size and differently constituted: Maryland, Louisiana, North Carolina, Indiana, Georgia, Iowa, and Ohio. In Tennessee the county court appoints the superintendent.

Practically all these systems are an improvement over the election by popular vote, but they are not entirely free from objections and the following observations are pertinent: Appointment by the governor or a single state official is unwise except in very small states, because such an official is too far removed from the local situation and the method also leaves room for "political patronage." The Tennessee idea is illogical because the connection between the county court and the county school system is hard to discover. Excellent results have followed the appointment of superintendents by state boards of education that are themselves professionally constituted. They usually select high-class superintendents if the salary is at all in keeping with the work required; but the idea smacks a little too much of centralized authority at long range. New Jersey pays excellent salaries to the county superintendents and has made a success of this plan. The convention scheme of Pennsylvania, or the large county boards of Indiana and Iowa, would be vastly more efficient if they were not so unwieldy. These large county boards can hardly become efficient administrative bodies of a county school system, and they are also more susceptible to political manipulation if they have but little other business relation with the county superintendent than merely electing him to his position.

The ideal way of selecting the county superintendent is doubtless the appointment by a small county board of education. Its connection with the work of the super-

intendent and the county schools should be sufficiently close to make the board "a power behind the throne." It should lay down broad lines of procedure only, leaving all details and professional matters to the judgment of the superintendent, and it should have the financial backing, provided by law, for building up a strong county school system.

In the East, Maryland has had a fairly good county board system for many years, but its powers were greatly strengthened and its value enhanced by wise legislation passed in 1916.[1]

In the West, Iowa has but recently changed from the elective system of superintendents to the appointive system by a county board; but a decided improvement of rural school supervision and administration is already apparent. The weakest point in the new law is that the county board is too large and clumsy and lacks adequate powers to build up an effective centralized school system. In Utah the office of county superintendent has been displaced by that of the district superintendent, who has supervision over all rural and free schools of his entire county. In a few instances the county is divided into school districts, each district having its own superintendent. The district superintendent is elected by a district board chosen by the people, and need not be a resident of the district or of the state.

In the South, Louisiana has beyond question the most efficient county system, called parish system in that state, and is making wonderful progress in its rural schools. All things considered, it is putting many of the older and richer states to shame.

In the Central states, Ohio is the latest state to create

[1] Report of the United States Bureau of Education for 1916, Vol. I, Chapter 12.

county boards of education, with power to elect professionally qualified county superintendents. This is but one of the many excellent provisions of the new code of school laws in Ohio, of which Commissioner P. P. Claxton has said, "It is doubtful if there has ever been more constructive and progressive school legislation enacted by a single session of the legislature in any state within the last half century." The new school system may be called "a mixed county and district system"; and the admirable blending of local and county control is worthy of special attention. The old district boundaries and the local boards remain, retaining their former powers but restricted by the powers of the new county board. The presidents of the several boards of education, in both the village and the rural districts, elect a county board of education consisting of five members. This board has general control and supervision over all county schools except city schools and certain village schools, the latter of which may be excluded from their control by vote. The principal powers and duties of the board are the following: (1) the election of a county superintendent of schools, professionally qualified for the position; (2) power to transfer territory from one school district to another and to readjust district boundaries; (3) it must divide the county into suitable supervisory districts consisting of one or more school districts, each of which elects its own district supervisor upon recommendation of the county superintendent. The executive head of the county board is the county superintendent, to whom the board delegates all professional work connected with the county schools and whom it holds strictly responsible for results. Ohio certainly has reasons to be proud of the rejuvenation of its entire school system by legislation of this character.

For more than ten years, Minnesota has kept up a strenuous fight in successive legislatures to rid itself of an abominable political elective system of county superintendents, which requires no other qualifications for that office save that the candidates must be resident voters of the county. So far, all efforts have been in vain. The politicians sit tight and block all progress. Other states have had similar experiences, and improvement in rural school supervision, the country over, is still extremely slow; but all indications point to the small county board idea as the best escape from a bad situation.

It must not be supposed from the preceding discussion that the rural schools, which have had to contend with some or all of these handicaps, have been entirely devoid of the leadership of high-minded men and women. On the contrary, scores of devoted superintendents in every part of the nation, and in every state of the Union, have risen above all obstacles of law and custom and have revolutionized their respective county schools and profoundly affected the rural life situation. They have fearlessly battled against ignorance, sloth, and obstinate opposition; and have championed the cause of country boys and girls with a fidelity, patience, vision, and confidence in their work that challenges our admiration. Far be it from any one to cast reflections upon their work or underestimate their success. The task confronting us now is to make this kind of leadership possible and reasonably certain in every rural school system of the country.

What some superintendents have achieved

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Rural School Organization and Support

WITH respect to organization and support, the different American states exhibit four main types of school systems — the district, town or township, county, and state systems. The state system, however, can hardly be regarded as an organization unit, but is more truly a unit of supervision and support. It is superimposed upon the other three systems, which it binds into one organic whole for the purpose of inspiration, improvement, standardization, supervision, and financial aid. It is usually presided over by a state board of education, state school commissioner, state superintendent of education, or state superintendent of public instruction. These officers, in turn, are aided by corps of assistants and inspectors. State systems are growing in importance in every state.

Types of school systems

As already indicated in Chapter III, the district system is the natural companion of our one-room rural school. It is nearly as old as the settlement of the country itself; it has held sway in nearly every state, for a time at least, and is still the basic school organization in more than half the states. People have come to associate the all but absolute "home rule" of the small school district with "pure and undefiled democracy" and cling tenaciously to the prerogatives that this system brought with it from the earliest times. Historically, the pioneers of rural America formed school districts in advance of any laws on the subject and as soon as the few families of a neighborhood started a public school. Such districts varied greatly in size and shape, not only in the separate states, but in the same state at different periods of its development. This varia-

1. The district system

tion still obtains to a remarkable degree in the newer states of the West, and in the more recently settled portions of older states. Thus Minnesota exhibits a variation, from the extremely small country district of three, four, or five sections of land in the southern part of the state, to the mammoth, so-called "unorganized district" in St. Louis County, west of Lake Superior, a district which embraces 90 townships, is larger than the states of Rhode Island and Delaware combined, has 115 schoolhouses within it, and employs 145 rural teachers. But this is an exceptional type, and only a few of them are found in the sparsely settled counties of northern Minnesota. In most of the states, as population increased, school districts multiplied until finally the older states in which the district system prevailed had from four to a dozen school districts for each township, with a bewildering maze of district boundaries.

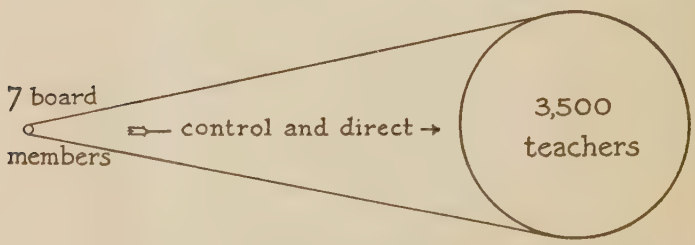
Pioneer districts had virtually complete control over all their school affairs, save for a nominal supervision of an advisory nature by county or state school officials. The voters of the district and the local board, consisting ordinarily of three trustees or supervisors, could select school sites, build schoolhouses to their liking, vote the taxes for buildings and maintenance, fix school terms, hire teachers, prescribe the course of study, etc., without let or hindrance. This sort of control became so firmly rooted during the slow economic development of early days that the same halo of sentiment which surrounded the "little red schoolhouse" also attached itself to the small school district with its local control. The indictment against the district system is that, for the meager results produced, it is expensive, wasteful, inefficient, unprogressive, totally inadequate to present-day needs, and unfair to country

The weakness of this system

children. Its supposed democracy is a delusion, for true democracy in education means equal opportunities for the children of one district with those of other districts and also a fairly well-equalized financial burden for the patrons. In both these respects, the small district fails completely.

A small school has been aptly characterized by President T. J. Coates of the State Normal School of Richmond, Kentucky, as follows: "The average farmer and rural teacher think of the rural school as a little house, on a little ground, with a little equipment, where a little teacher, for a little while at a little salary, teaches little children, little things." Had he added to this description that the above institution is located in a little district with a little assessed valuation, in which people of little vision do little for themselves and their little children, the picture of a typical rural school in a typical rural district of the old kind would have been complete. Thank God that the American farmer is beginning to see the injustice his children have to suffer now from such a system.

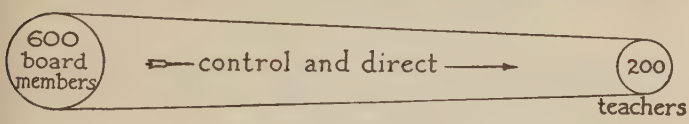
A great handicap and weakness of the small district system has always been the multitude of school officers




The city school system

chosen to administer its affairs. If a school board of from five to seven members can effectively direct the

school affairs of a city enrolling from 25,000 to 100,000 pupils and employing hundreds or even thousands of teachers, no stretch of the imagination can figure out why the rural schools of a county enrolling 4000 pupils and




The rural school system

employing 200 teachers should elect 600 school board members to direct those teachers and their schools. It would be fully as sensible to raise an army and appoint three officers for every enlisted private and then expect efficiency and economy from that army by making each group of three officers entirely independent of every other group and making all officers of equal rank and power! Experience everywhere has conclusively proved that the small district form of school organization is the worst possible; and it has been condemned by educational leaders for more than half a century. District taxation will be considered at the end of this chapter under the head of school support.

2. The town or township system

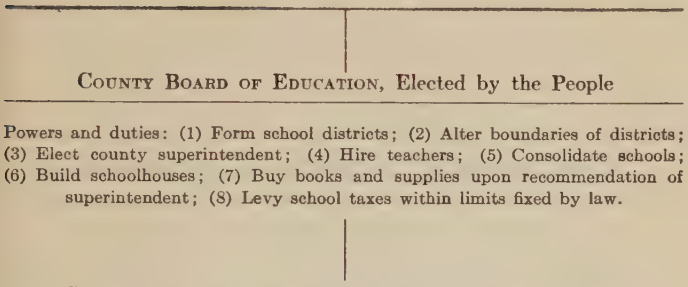
This type of organization is a distinct advance over the district system and will gain in importance as "school townships" resolve themselves into consolidated school districts, with not more than one or two central schools in each township instead of the numerous, small, one-room schools now existing. It is prominent in the New England states, where a single board, called the Town School Committee, manages both the graded and ungraded schools of the town (township). A commendable fairness and solicitude for the welfare of both classes of schools is shown by

most committees, and the district lines of former days have been obliterated except for the purpose of classification and attendance. The town system of these states is superior to that of certain North Central states which have what is commonly referred to as "the township system" of common schools. This usually excludes the independent village schools from the jurisdiction of the township board and limits the board's control to the ungraded rural schools. In some of these states the township system is really a mixture of both district and township type, nor is it uniformly adopted by all counties.

Since the township board is farther removed from the petty neighborhood strife and narrowness of the small district, the system affords a better basis for equalizing educational opportunities and school taxes, reduces the number of school officers, and makes for greater efficiency. It is a step in the evolution of the district system into something better.

3. The county system

When rightly conceived and ably developed, the county school system can be made an admirable unit of organization and control. The administration should be in the hands of a small county board, with power to elect a competent superintendent as head of the system. The board should possess the legal authority to levy a uniform county school tax for maintenance within definitely prescribed limits. The following additional powers and duties are also vital and necessary: the fixing and alteration of district boundaries, the consolidation of schools, the erection of school buildings, the furnishing of books and supplies, the hiring of teachers, determining and fixing of a uniform school term for the entire county, and the formulating of a broad educational policy for the school system. All professional


THE PEOPLE
County Board of Education, Elected by the People
Powers and duties: (1) Form school districts; (2) Alter boundaries of districts; (3) Elect county superintendent; (4) Hire teachers; (5) Consolidate schools; (6) Build schoolhouses; (7) Buy books and supplies upon recommendation of superintendent; (8) Levy school taxes within limits fixed by law.
County Superintendent, Elected by the County Board
Powers and duties: (1) Appoint assistants; (2) Nominate all teachers; (3) Plan course of study; (4) Recommend textbooks and supplies; (5) Supervise, direct, and visit teachers; (6) Shape the educational policy of the county; (7) Act as executive officer of county board.

The ideal county system

matters should be left to the superintendent. His judgment should rule in the selection of textbooks and supplies, he should prepare suitable courses of study, no teachers should be employed except upon his recommendation and nomination, and the superintendent and board should have regular meetings for consultation and transaction of business. The superintendent should be *ex officio* a member of the board, with full power to discuss any matter coming before it, but without the right to vote.

A system thus centralized does away with the gross inequalities and the niggardly policy of local support that is so conspicuous and so deadening in the district system. The county system is more logical and efficient than either township or district system, but if adopted, it should not entirely obliterate all local subdivisions. Many minor functions of administration should be left

for local trustees, who would act as representatives of both the central authority and the local community and stimulate local pride on the one hand, while seconding the efforts of the central authority on the other.

In the Southern states, where the county has always been the predominating political unit and where the township and small district have never played an important part in local government, the opportunity for building up strong and efficient county school systems is excellent. The fact that their public schools of today have been largely developed since the Civil War, gave them the further advantage of profiting by the mistakes which other states had been making in developing their systems. Because of these conditions we may confidently expect great progress in rural school betterment in the South during the next decade. Her people are singularly free from the shackles of precedent in school matters which fetter so many of the Northern states and make progress so slow.

County systems in evolution

In states where the district or the township system now holds sway, the county system must develop gradually; but its advantages are so apparent that reorganization with this end in view is going on all over the country. The final solution will likely be a compromise between the various types, and the rapid spread of consolidation is going to be a big factor in this modifying process. It is highly probable that the establishment of strong consolidated elementary and high schools in the open country and small villages will invest the local boards of such schools with considerable power for their maintenance and administration; and the principal functions of the county system will be to furnish effective supervision, just and equitable distribution of school taxes, and proper standards of instruction. In addition to these, its officers

will act as the chief agents and representatives of the state departments of education, carrying out the general policies of the state with regard to public schools and public education.

## TAXATION AND SCHOOL SUPPORT

The unadulterated "simple life" is led by savages only. Civilized man has many wants, and his individual wants soon multiply and become collective wants. These can be satisfied most readily by collective action through government. In order to serve its people best, however, government not only tries to secure for them the right to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," but has many other objects in view for their general welfare. To accomplish these ends equitably and justly, it taxes the wealth of the people for public purposes, and this has constituted one of the greatest problems of governments from time immemorial.

A word about taxation

In early days, taxes were mostly tributes laid by rulers upon their subjects, and since those subjects received little or no benefits in return for their taxes, they paid just as little as possible. Everybody hated the thought of taxes, and the old proverb, "Nothing is certain but death and taxes," expressed precisely the feeling of the public towards taxes, both in general and in particular. It is not strange, therefore, that some people still regard taxes as a necessary evil instead of a public benefit, and partly because of inborn human selfishness and partly because of the difficulty of administering tax-laws justly and impartially, the "tax dodger" is still with us.

Since in a democracy the success of government rests upon the intelligence of the governed, the facts about public taxation should be set forth clearly and distinctly

and should be better understood by all citizens than they are today, even in our most enlightened communities. Grumbling about high taxes is heard in every community; and usually the person who complains the loudest knows the least about the subject, and yet he makes little or no effort to inform himself.

School taxes compared with other taxes

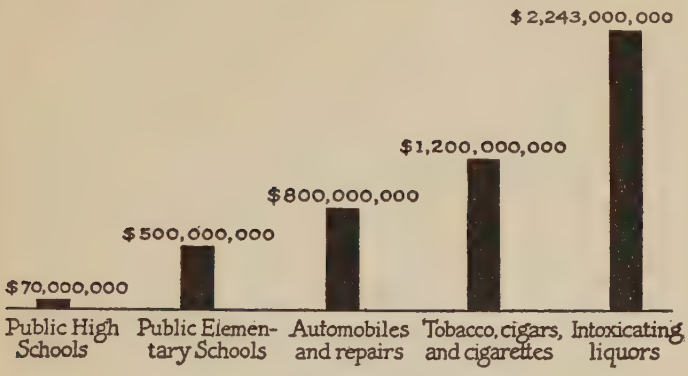
According to the federal bureau of education, the total cost of all education in the United States for the year 1914 was nearly $800,000,000;[1] and by allowing the usual ratio of increase per year, the total for 1917 will very likely exceed the billion-dollar mark. This is a respectable sum, to be sure, but only $500,000,000 of the sum is credited to public elementary schools and $70,000,000 to public high schools. The balance, or $230,000,000, is paid out to private schools, technical schools, normal schools, colleges, and universities. The sum of $570,000,000 just mentioned, when compared with other items of national expenditures, is not so startling after all. It is less than three fourths of the annual automobile bill for the United States,[2] less than one half the tobacco bill, just about one fourth of the drink bill, and only about four fifths of one per cent of the amount that Europe is said to have expended on the world war from August, 1914, to August, 1916.

Facts like these help to dispel the notion that the nation is suffering unduly from school taxes. If we should spend our annual tobacco bill for education, it would allow $50 a year for each of our twenty-four million

[1] See Report of the United States Commissioner of Education for 1916, Vol. I, page 3.

[2] In round numbers, this country is estimated to have spent the following amounts for the purposes indicated, during 1916:

| | |
|---|---|
| Automobiles and repairs | $ 800,000,000 |
| Tobacco (including cigars and cigarettes) | $1,200,000,000 |
| Intoxicating liquors | $2,243,000,000 |




School taxes and other taxes

children of school age and give high school facilities to all American boys and girls; and our drink bill would give about $450 apiece, annually, to five million young men and women in college or university.

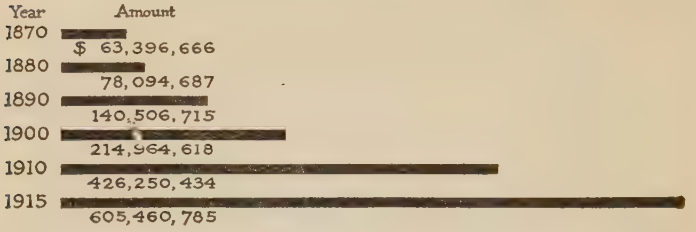
In proportion to our wealth, the school expenditures of the nation are still very low.[1] Carefully prepared statistics by the Russell Sage Foundation show that for the year 1910 the amount spent for education in the United States varied from 19 cents out of each $100 worth of wealth in New Hampshire to 75 cents per $100 in Oklahoma. The latest report of the United States Bureau of Education [2] shows further that for the school year 1913–1914, the average daily expense per pupil in all the states was 24.6 cents, varying from the minimum of 7.56 cents in Mississippi to the maximum of 45.76 cents in Arizona. The average annual per capita

Wealth and school taxes

[1] Total wealth of the United States for the years 1900, 1904, and 1912, respectively, as given by the United States Department of Commerce.

| 1900 | 1904 | 1912 |
|---|---|---|
| $88,517,306,775 | $107,104,211,917 | $187,739,071,090 |

[2] See Report of the United States Bureau of Education, 1916, Vol. II.




Total expenditures for public elementary and high schools in the United States

expense per pupil for the entire country, according to the same report, was $21.34. This varied from $4.53 in Mississippi to $49.58 in California.

The percentage of wealth which the country is now spending each year for education is doubtless lower than it was a century or even a generation ago; but so rapid has been the increase of our national wealth that in spite of the lowered percentage we have nearly trebled our public school expenditures in the last ten years. This is perhaps without a parallel in the history of the world.

**Rural school taxes**

One sad feature of this progress in better school support is that the rural schools are sharing but meagerly the increased blessings of education. About three fourths of all the school revenue in the United States is raised by local taxation. Taxes are levied on both real and personal property of each school district, and in the rural districts it is nearly always under the direct control of the voters at the annual school meeting. It is a notorious fact that a large number of the voters attend the annual meeting with the sole object in view of keeping down taxes and tax rates; consequently, the average rural district is trying to run its public school on a small fraction of the amount spent for the same grade of schools by villages and cities. To get

any kind of satisfactory support for rural schools, therefore, the local tax in most country districts must be doubled. Nothing short of an educational revival throughout the rural communities will accomplish this; but until the money is forthcoming, it is useless to talk about equal educational advantages and opportunities for country and city children.

Because we are citizens of states and of the nation and not of school districts or minor political units, and because the life of each citizen reacts for good or evil upon the lives of all other citizens, it is evident that the training of citizens is the business of state and nation and not of any minor municipality. The welfare of the entire commonwealth is affected by the educational standards and the measure of financial support given to education by the smallest school district of the state; hence it is illogical and dangerous to intrust the local school districts with a large degree of authority over school finances. It is equally true that the resources of the entire state and the concentrated wealth of the larger units of taxation should come to the rescue of small, weak districts and share with them the burden of taxation. This brings us to the important question of the best unit for school support.

**Education and educational support the business of state and nation**

Had the American mind been trained to a larger view of citizenship and ruminated less among the cobwebs of local self-government, jealously guarding every minor prerogative of an outworn past, the real blessings of true democracy would not so often have eluded our grasp. Because of this lack of vision, the people have clung doggedly to local independence of school support and have failed to perceive that the state is by far the best unit of taxation for school

**1. State system of support**

purposes. Wealth is now so unevenly distributed in every state that people must rely upon the state-wide use of incomes from state lands, mines, transportation systems, industrial corporations, and the like for the welfare of all the citizens, in all parts of the state. Consequently, a generous state tax for school purposes, levied on all state property and incomes, should form a substantial part of our school tax. By this method, the wealthier counties aid the poorer ones, and the city dwellers share the burdens with the farmers. It means justice for all and special favors for none. California has demonstrated the wisdom of this plan so completely that good schools are found in the poorest sections of the state, thanks to an equitable, state-wide tax for maintenance. Local taxation in that state is limited mostly to the upkeep and erection of school buildings.

2. Special state aid

Where the people cannot be persuaded to exchange a local system of school support for a state-wide system, the district school taxes should at least be supplemented with a substantial amount of state aid, granted for the purpose of making better school conditions possible. This aid should be based primarily upon these three factors: (1) the number of teachers employed, their grade of certificate, and the amount of salary paid; (2) the length of the school term and the attendance of pupils; (3) the local tax rate and property valuation of the district.

The most equitable distribution of the aid, which at the same time will put a premium on local effort to provide the best possible and most desirable school conditions in the district, must emphasize the following:

(1) The major portion of the aid should be granted for the employment of thoroughly trained and adequately paid teachers.

(2) A definite amount should next be paid to all districts voting a term of eight months or more, except that schools with shorter terms may be aided if the local tax is unusually high.

(3) Attendance aid should be a fixed sum per pupil per day of actual attendance at school.

(4) Wherever an extremely high local tax for the maintenance of an efficient school is required in addition to the state aid just outlined, a further allowance may be made for this reason.

A community definitely assured of liberal annual state aid, according to this or a similar scheme, would naturally make every effort to meet all reasonable requirements of the state for an efficient school. In addition to the general state aid distributed and granted on the above basis, certain other fixed amounts may well be allowed for the encouragement of higher education and superior equipment, such as instruction in agriculture, manual training, domestic arts, and other industrial subjects; consolidation; transportation of pupils; building of teachers' houses; and building aid for modern schoolhouses of the best type.

Massachusetts has made it a practice for many years to grant such aid for a number of the purposes here enumerated; Vermont was the first state to grant aid specifically for the transportation of pupils to consolidated schools; while Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, Iowa, and others have provided special aid for a variety of purposes, with gratifying results. The most conspicuous example of all is, perhaps, Minnesota, which is now giving annually about two and a half million dollars for the encouragement of better high schools, graded schools, semi-graded schools, and a superior type of one-room rural schools.

Owing to the unequal distribution of wealth in modern times, district taxation as the basis of school support is most unfair if not supplemented by substantial county or state levies. Left to local initiative and local control, the tax rates in various school districts of the same county, because of the different-sized districts and the difference in the spirit of the people, will range from less than a mill of local school tax to 10 or 15 mills, even if land values and farming conditions are almost identical. If the comparison is carried still further and the poorer districts of one county are contrasted with the more favored ones of other counties, it is not uncommon to find that the people in one district pay from twenty to fifty times as high a rate of school tax as those of another district. Such conditions must be regarded by all fair-minded people as intolerable and indefensible. They form another powerful indictment against the small-district system.

3. District unit of support

Uniform school taxes by townships and an equal distribution of the same to all the township schools is a step towards equitable and fair school support; but even the township is too small a unit of support if the difference in wealth between the several townships of the county is pronounced. Where this is true, the county should be made the local unit of support, especially if a large part of the school tax is raised locally and does not come in the form of state tax or state aid.

4. Township unit of support

There are two principal reasons for the superiority of the county system of school support over the district and township systems. In the first place, the better distribution of wealth will equalize taxes more than either the district or the township unit. In the second place, the voting and distribution of school taxes in a county system is likely to be placed in the

5. County unit of support

hands of an intelligent school board instead of being left to the caprice of the voters at the annual school meeting. A more businesslike and intelligent support is therefore certain to result; and with reasonable state support in addition, excellent schools can then be developed in the country as well as in cities and villages.

Having now examined the prerequisite conditions for an up-to-date rural school system, namely, a new kind of leadership and supervision and a new system of administration, organization, and support, we shall next describe, explain, and define the new rural school itself.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### The New Rural School

IT is evident from the preceding discussion that the modern rural school is an unusual and complex institution that must be prepared to do new things in a new way. To emphasize this we have noted somewhat in detail the purpose, scope, necessity, and trend of modern education; the shortcomings of the old country school system and its supervision, organization, administration, and support. Every thoughtful person must realize from this situation that if the country school is to fulfill its mission, it must form new points of contact with the actual and practical problems of life and offer a comprehensive program of community service. Popular ideas of the purpose of education have in the last few years undergone a veritable revolution. The demand for vocational and industrial training is insistent and nation wide; and the world food shortage, so suddenly revealed, redoubles the emphasis that must be laid upon agricultural training hereafter. Efficiency is the watchword of the world, and industrial efficiency is the keystone in the arch of general efficiency. The eyes of the people should therefore be turned upon its schools with a searching inquiry, to see if their training is such as to make efficient citizens out of our boys and girls — citizens who possess both the power and spirit "to make this world safe for democracy," as President Wilson has recently phrased it. Let no one suppose for a moment that this noble achievement can be permanently sustained except it rest upon the bed rock of a liberty-loving, intelligent, just, and truly democratic citizenship. In accomplishing this task, the rural school must be prepared to do its full share.

Characteristics of the new school

While the city schools can call to their aid many social and civic institutions and agencies to supplement their efforts, such things are entirely lacking or difficult to establish and maintain in the rural districts. Accordingly, this additional work of social redirection and community building becomes the natural and logical function of the rural school just as truly as the instruction of boys and girls in the fundamentals of an elementary education. In the nature of the case, therefore, the school will serve a twofold purpose; namely, that of furnishing a social center for community enterprises and activities and that of providing an up-to-date, well-graded school of instruction — a school capable of reaching all country boys and girls and educating them at home to the same degree of efficiency that the city school is training its boys and girls. But this does not mean a city graded school transplanted into the country. Far from it! It means a school whose atmosphere is distinctly rural, whose teachers are rurally minded and in full sympathy and harmony with farm life and farm problems, but no less refined and cultured than city teachers; it means that the work of the school must be comprehensive and thorough and capable of awakening in the pupils a feeling of respect and love for school, home, and community; it means a bigger school in the sense of a larger enrollment and of serving a larger territory than the old one-room school served; it means the employment of enough teachers to secure proper division of labor, giving ample time for instruction and recitation in every class and affording suitable grading and classification for all pupils; and finally, it means provision for industrial and agricultural training, and high school as well as elementary school privileges for all country boys and girls.

Peculiar demands made upon it

Such a school will rise above the pettiness and narrow-

ness so commonly met in the circumscribed sphere of the small school. Its bustle and activity of increased numbers and the wider contact with a larger circle of friends and neighbors will make for solidarity and social unity of the district. Its commanding position and the substantial and permanent character of buildings and grounds will create a new kind of civic pride; and, as a community center, its usefulness will be limited only by the appreciation and aspiration of its patrons. This, in a nutshell, is the field of the consolidated school and the new rural education.

**The consolidated school defined**

The term "consolidated school" has been employed by different writers to denote several classes of schools, variously organized and differing widely in aim and efficiency, including the following:

(1) Union schools
(2) Semi-graded and graded consolidated schools
(3) Complete consolidated schools

**1. Union schools**

The union school is native to certain Southern states like Georgia and the Carolinas, but the type also occurs in many other states. In its simplest form it results from the closing of one or more small district schools and the transfer of the pupils to an adjoining school, with or without transportation. The resulting school then employs one or two teachers, according to the number of children enrolled. In the smaller union schools it is a common practice to use one of the old district buildings, and when two teachers are employed to curtain off or divide the schoolroom into two parts by means of an improvised partition. When only one teacher is employed, the plan is no improvement over the former separate district schools, except that it may save the taxpayers a little money. It really tends to

aggravate rather than improve the former unsatisfactory school conditions by the resultant crowding of pupils into a small and inadequate building and by the increased number of classes. Even where two teachers are employed, but the school is housed in a poor type of building, there is small advantage over the old system.

The larger union schools, however, are frequently housed in more pretentious buildings and furnish the basis for well-graded school systems. When properly organized and supervised, they naturally lead to complete consolidation, and herein lies their great potential value. As a system, the union schools are but a makeshift, pointing the way to permanent consolidation as their final goal.

The second type of school arises in those consolidated school districts that have not a sufficient number of pupils to organize complete consolidated schools. They are permanent in character and logical in plan. Most of them have new and substantial central school buildings, to which the pupils are regularly transported as in the larger complete consolidated schools. They employ two or three and sometimes even four teachers and offer a modest beginning in agricultural and other industrial subjects, but limit themselves to the work of the eight grades below the high school. One group of these schools abounds in the thinly settled districts of the Western and North Central states, where complete consolidation is not yet possible; and a second group is located in the South, where lack of financial resources precludes the better class. Occasionally such a school is met with in a thickly settled and prosperous farming region where the idea of consolidation is still new to the people and where local prejudice against the innovation is so strong that only two or three small districts can be persuaded to petition and vote in

2. Semi-graded and graded consolidated schools

favor of consolidation. But the aim and ambition of most of these schools is to grow into the larger type by future addition of territory or by waiting until the districts become more thickly populated. Wherever present conditions make the formation of complete consolidated schools impossible for several years to come, the smaller schools are justified as a temporary compromise. They are doing excellent work within their limitations and are overcoming many of the deficiencies of the one-room school.

**3. Complete consolidated schools**

As used in this book, the term "complete consolidated school" means a well-graded central school in a legally and completely consolidated school district, employing four, five, or more teachers and offering from two to four years of high school work in addition to the work of the eight grades. The district must also, at public expense, provide for the regular and systematic transportation of all pupils in the district who live beyond a reasonable walking distance from the school. This is the ideal rural school of the future and should be the ultimate goal and ambition of every community.

**Partial consolidation**

In making the transition from district schools to consolidated schools, a few of the new districts have inaugurated what may be termed "partial consolidation." They transport the high school and grammar grade pupils to a central building, but retain the old one-room schools for the primary children, who thus attend school near home. The supposition is that this plan favors the little folks by avoiding the hardship of transportation, but the assumption is misleading and false. Under a properly organized transportation system the hardships of travel exist largely in the imagination of the people who champion this plan. It is a greater hardship for little children to walk to school through snow, slush, rain, and mud for a distance of a mile or more than it is

for them to ride to school in a comfortable bus for a distance of four or five miles. Besides, the children lose all the incentive, competition, encouragement, and enthusiasm of large classes at the central school. Add to this handicap the fact that the children are doomed to the monotonous and deadening routine of small classes, in school buildings that lack every convenience and comfort of a modern schoolhouse, and the further fact that their teachers are deprived of the expert daily supervision of a good principal, and the folly of the system at once becomes apparent. If a central school and public transportation are valuable and essential to bring together the high school and grammar grade pupils, it is manifestly unfair to the younger children to keep them in schools where neither the instruction nor the environment can ever be made right. If, on the other hand, such partially consolidated districts hope to keep down taxation by relying upon individual pupils to furnish their own transportation, waste instead of economy will be the result. Individual transportation is, in the aggregate, the most expensive for the community as a whole; and a further disadvantage will result to the poorer farmers of the neighborhood who cannot afford individual means of transportation for their children. Free transportation for all pupils, at public expense and under complete control of the school authorities of the district, is the only sensible and just solution of that problem for the consolidated school.

School site and playgrounds

The familiar unsightly box-car type of school building situated on a cramped and neglected plot of ground at the crossroads, somewhere near the center of the district, has been tolerated so long by the American farmer that we have practically dissociated the idea of beauty from the country school. But since childhood is the most impressionable period of

life, and since love for the beautiful in nature as well as in art must be inculcated early in order to be lasting, every reason tells us that we ought to make the school grounds the most beautiful spot in the community. The school grounds in a consolidated district should be ample, containing at least three acres and preferably four or five. They should be located on high, well-drained ground, and have a wide frontage, and the buildings should be set back sufficiently to allow for a well-kept lawn with flower beds, appropriate shrubbery, and concrete or graveled walks. At the side or back of the building there should be extensive playgrounds for both sexes, fitted up with swings, seesaws, giant strides, horizontal bars, flying rings, chutes, and other apparatus to suit the various ages of children. They should also include tennis and basket-ball courts, and baseball diamonds for the older pupils, so as to afford a great variety of delightful, organized play, which constitutes the greatest joy of childhood but has been singularly neglected in the country. The playground equipment should be substantial but need not be expensive. Much of it can be made by the older pupils in connection with their industrial work.

Back of the playgrounds, in the rear of the lot, suitable sheds and barns should be erected to accommodate all teams and conveyances required for the transportation of pupils. These buildings should be neatly painted to harmonize with the school building proper and should be kept scrupulously clean. A small vegetable garden to serve the double purpose of furnishing observation work and material for classes in agriculture and nature study and of supplying the principal's family and other teachers with plenty of fresh vegetables in season, is both an essential and convenient feature of the plan. More important, however, from the community standpoint is a neat flower

garden under direct care of teachers and pupils and planted with suitable annual and perennial flowers and shrubs. The scheme should further include a small wood lot and orchard for study and experiment in horticultural classes. Finally, the entire grounds should be surrounded on three sides with at least a double row of evergreens, shade trees, and ornamental trees native to the section. Where wind breaks are needed, the trees should be massed effectively but in pleasing fashion. In no case should a tree be planted within fifty feet of the building, because nature's most beneficent gift to childhood, the bright sunshine, must not be excluded from the building at any point.

The objections raised to a program of school-ground improvement as here outlined are based upon former experience in the care of country schoolyards during the summer vacations when otherwise fairly well-kept grounds have fallen into universal neglect; but in a consolidated school district a condition like this ought not to prevail. The board should engage its principal by the year and require him to give the school plant his thought and attention during the summer vacation as well as during the school year. If need be, the district might employ the janitor on part time during the summer months for the express purpose of looking after school grounds and buildings. What a splendid place for picnics, community play, neighborhood gatherings, and meetings of all kinds such a spot could easily be made! The returns, measured in terms of a richer and sweeter life, would exceed the added expense manifold.

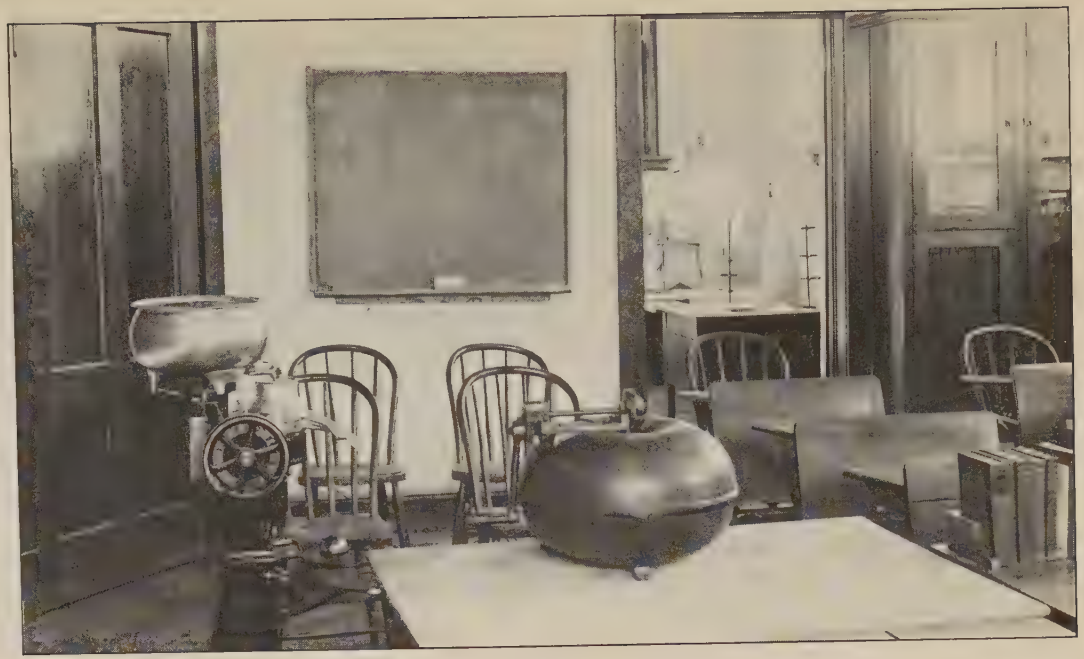
Some schools have gone a step farther still and have added an experimental school farm of from ten to twenty or forty acres. But this move is of doubtful value unless the school serves also as a government experiment station. If it does not, the scientific

Experimental plots

experiments in agriculture and the practical work of this kind that is within the comprehension of the pupils, like canning, gardening, corn-club work, pig raising, and similar undertakings, should preferably be done on the home farm. There they can make use of all the farm tools and home facilities without duplication and additional expense, and yet be working under the direction and intelligent supervision of the school faculty. Most high schools and consolidated schools that have tried school farming on an extensive scale, have found the work difficult to carry out and have discovered that the time and money spent in the maintenance of the plots was out of all proportion to the benefits derived. "Look before you leap" is a good motto for all boards of education and superintendents or principals of schools who have visions of extensive school farms in connection with the average consolidated school.

Size of school building

So important is the subject of a proper school building for a modern consolidated school that a complete volume might be written on it without exhausting the topic, but for a work of this kind a bare outline of the essential features must suffice. In the first place, a consolidated school building must be planned for permanency and must serve the community for many years after its erection. It must therefore be large enough to house the school population of the district at the time of building and allow for liberal future growth. Almost every village and progressive city in the country looks back with regret upon the errors committed by its people in the building of new schoolhouses. The schoolhouse that was supposed to meet the needs of the community for ten, fifteen, or twenty years, actually proved too small within five years and either required costly additions or necessitated a new structure. Not only did this short-sighted policy waste thousands of dollars for the tax-



Agricultural laboratory of consolidated school at Alberta, Minnesota

payers, but it also caused needless strife and dissension in the community. Too frequently country people have assumed that conditions like these would not arise in a rural district and that a school building large enough to shelter comfortably the school children of the abandoned one-room schools would be sufficient for the consolidated school. School officers in charge of consolidated schools, however, have found to their sorrow that in the past, nearly one half of the new school buildings proved inadequate in size within three or four years. The experience should be a warning to all; and a community is short-sighted indeed if it will not heed the lesson which others have so dearly paid for. A consolidated school building should be of sufficient capacity to accommodate from fifty to a hundred per cent more pupils than were formerly enrolled in the abandoned schools. At first sight this seems to be an abnormally large allowance, but the power of attracting and holding the older pupils of the community and the greater floor space required for high school and industrial work as compared with ordinary grade work, is nearly always underestimated. The probability of the district's enlargement must also be taken into account, especially if adjacent farms outside the district are within easy driving distance of the new school. Finally, the population of most rural districts is bound to increase materially within the next ten or twenty years.

That the school building should be constructed of stone, brick, or other durable material, goes without saying. Not only is it more economical in the long run, but rural people have a right to expect and demand that these larger school buildings shall be attractive, safe, durable, sanitary, and in keeping with the highest community ideals. They represent a large financial investment and a high degree of neighbor-

**Appearance and character of buildings**

hood coöperation, the results of which should be commensurate with the efforts put forth. In this community home the children will spend a large share of their time, and the impressions which they receive here will accompany them through life. The very building itself should, therefore, be an object of inspiration and pleasant memories; and while the pupils may forget many a lesson taught them within its walls, they should never forget the school and its environment. Alas, the pictures that country children have been compelled to carry away from thousands of miserable rural schoolhouses all over the country! Have we not in our thoughtlessness shamefully robbed our boys and girls of the æsthetic element in their sensitive natures by such surroundings? If so, shall we continue to rob them indefinitely?

**The basement**

In the open country, land is too cheap to economize on ground space when erecting a new schoolhouse. The building should cover a sufficient area to allow for the location of all classrooms and recitation rooms above ground. If a basement is provided at all, its use should be restricted to furnace and fuel rooms, janitor's workshop, and storage room. It may, however, in addition contain the lavatories and a combined gymnasium and auditorium, if the total cost of the building can be reduced by such an arrangement; otherwise these also should be built above ground. Under no circumstances should a basement or sub-basement contain a classroom or a recitation room, because basement rooms are injurious to the health of children. Even the location of a manual-training shop or a domestic-science room in a school basement is unwise and open to serious objections. All school basements should extend but a few feet into the ground and from six to ten feet above the ground level, in order to give plenty of light and ventilation.

By means of skylights for the central portion of the building and unilateral side light for the classrooms and recitation rooms surrounding this central part, unique and excellent one-story school buildings can be erected that will accommodate from three hundred to a thousand pupils. Such buildings afford a maximum of safety in case of fire or panic and eliminate stairways entirely. They avoid the heavy reinforced construction of walls and of the floors of the second story, and make it possible to raise the ceiling of the central auditorium or gymnasium without disturbing a floor level above. While this type of building is comparatively recent in school architecture and construction, it merits the careful consideration of any building committee. Its future looks bright.

**The one-story building**

In external appearance the two-story building has some advantages over the one-story type. It also lends itself nicely to a convenient separation of the smaller children from the larger ones, because of the two floors of the building. Most of the larger village and open-country graded and high schools are of this type; and no country school building should ever have more than two stories above the basement. There may be some excuse for erecting schoolhouses of three or more stories in congested city districts where building lots are at a premium, but there is no excuse for them in the open country.

**The two-story building**

No matter what kind or size of school building a district may be planning to build, there is wisdom in making it conform to what is known as "the unit plan of construction." This takes into account both the present and future needs of the district, requires a symmetrical design for the complete building, and allows for additions or enlargements at a minimum cost without

**The unit plan of building**

disturbing the part originally constructed. The architect and board must, from the beginning, keep in mind the complete building and adopt no plan which would result in waste spaces or dark rooms and hallways if the building should need to be enlarged in the future. They must also plan the front of the building with great care, to preserve the harmony and unity of the entire structure. Schoolhouse designing is both an art and a serious business undertaking, and none but specialists should be intrusted with the planning of a school building. Such men need to have expert knowledge of lighting, ventilation, water supply, arrangement of rooms, and scores of details and special features that are essential to the success of the building and that insure the maximum of efficiency at a minimum of cost. An architect may even be a master in the designing of city high schools and graded schools and yet fail miserably in planning a consolidated rural school building requiring certain features which are quite different from those of the other type.

Every consolidated school building designed to accommodate more than one hundred pupils should make definite arrangements for the following: (1) a large auditorium with suitable stage and provision for a good school lantern; (2) a lunchroom adjacent to the domestic science department; (3) a gymnasium with adjoining shower baths and lavatories for both sexes; (4) a combined science and agricultural laboratory; and (5) a well-equipped manual-training room. It is usually possible and advisable to have one large room serve the dual purpose of gymnasium and auditorium, and this should be freely used for all kinds of school and community gatherings and entertainments. If the domestic-science department is located next to the auditorium, the latter may also serve as the lunchroom of

**Special features of consolidated school buildings**

the school during the noon hour; otherwise, a separate lunchroom ought to be provided. In case the gymnasium is not used as an auditorium, the high school study room may be combined with adjacent classrooms by means of folding partitions, so that practically the entire second floor may be converted into one large auditorium for assembly purposes, while the separate rooms permit of being used daily for regular class work. Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon this all-important community-center auditorium. Its use will be discussed more fully in a later chapter.

At least from November until April each school year, hot lunches for all pupils living at a distance from the schoolhouse should be prepared and served by the domestic-science department at the noon hour. This is not only conducive to the health and enjoyment of the children, but it furnishes an opportunity for practical lessons in the cooking of simple, palatable, and properly prepared dishes of various kinds, the cost of which is but a few cents per child each day. Even penny-a-day lunches have been found feasible and sufficient. This community meal affords an excellent opportunity for teachers and pupils to observe and teach correct table manners and to practice the common courtesies of life and social intercourse.

The agricultural department and laboratory should be opened as freely to the adult farmers for consultation as for class instruction during school hours; and in the matter of seed corn testing, feeding rations, germination and purity tests of grass seeds and grains, soil analysis, grafting and care of fruit trees, and the like, the work should personify and supplement the actual work on the neighborhood farms. The same may be said with equal force of the manual-training work of the boys and the domestic-science work of the girls. Should the consolidated school

fail to make its industrial work for both sexes distinctly practical and directly applicable to actual farm conditions, it would fail in one of the fundamental purposes for which it was created.

Other important features of the building

The best authorities on schoolroom lighting recommend that for all classrooms not exceeding twenty-three feet in width the light should be unilateral, and the glass area of the windows in each room should be at least one fifth of the floor space. Translucent shades are the most serviceable in controlling the direct glare of the sun; and dark, opaque shades should not be used at all. Adjustable shades are excellent; but if the stationary type is used, the shades should be fastened on double rollers at the middle of the window, one rolling downward and the other upward. A pleasing color scheme of light tints for the walls and ceiling, on a smoothly plastered surface, adds cheerfulness and disciplinary value to the room; and a little direct sunlight for the schoolroom is a great disinfectant. As to direction, the consensus of opinions now seems to be that the east, west, south, and north lights should be preferred in the order named. When we stop to reflect that numerous investigations have shown that about one fourth of the school children in country or city schools have defective eyesight, the question of proper schoolroom lighting assumes extremely significant importance. The placing of blackboards between windows is a pernicious practice, as it causes a heavy strain to be placed upon the eyes of pupils who try to focus them on the wall of the room while facing the irritating, direct light from the windows.

Fan ventilation by means of a gas engine or electric motor is highly desirable and within the reach of every large consolidated school. It is much better than any gravity system, and the cost of operation is slight com-

pared with its benefits. Nor should we forget that the proper humidity of the air is just as important as its temperature. From sixty-five to seventy degrees Fahrenheit is commonly accepted as the right temperature of the schoolroom; and this, with about fifty per cent humidity and a supply of thirty cubic feet of fresh outdoor air per minute per child, meets with the approval of most authorities on schoolroom ventilation. Rotation of air and rebreathing of foul air should not be permitted.

Water supply and toilets

The best method of furnishing an ample supply of good water where a free-flowing spring is not available, is to pump it from a deep driven or bored well into a pressure tank by means of a small engine and from there to force it to all parts of the building. This makes possible the sanitary bubbling fountains on all floors, as well as flush toilets, shower baths, and every other convenience of a modern water system. By connecting the toilets with a properly constructed septic tank, costing but a few hundred dollars, the disgraceful outdoor toilets of the country school are completely eliminated. This matter of the right kind of toilets and their proper supervision is of the utmost importance, but has usually been criminally neglected. We have supposed that young girls of seventeen or eighteen years, who are but children themselves and often woefully ignorant of the elementary principles of child life, could be safely intrusted with the delicate task of sex supervision and moral guidance of a promiscuous flock of boys and girls in the critical period of sex development. All the world knows, however, that even mature and thoughtful parents are liable to make a sad muddle of their own children's training at this time of life, when sympathetic insight into their problems and wise counsel are of supreme importance. Now with young and inexperienced teachers, a false modesty on the one

hand or utter lack of understanding on the other has caused them to tolerate conditions in the outbuildings of rural schools that should make civilized communities blush with shame. To remedy this crying evil, the boys' toilet room demands the intelligent attention of the principal or capable janitor at each recess period, and the girls' toilets to be similarly supervised by one of the women teachers. Some system should furthermore be devised which will prevent too much mingling of the smaller and larger children in these places. If the consolidated school should bring to country children no other blessing than the comfort and security of clean, warm, supervised, indoor toilets, it would be worth every cent of additional tax which the farmers will be obliged to pay for its support. The immorality, filth, and menace to public health which have been lurking in the miserable toilet facilities of the average rural school, beggar all description.

**The library**

A pleasant library room with appropriate shelves, book cases, magazine racks, and reading tables, filled with a well-chosen assortment of books and periodicals, is a powerful adjunct to the school. In addition to a full supply of the latest and best supplementary reading and reference works for every class and department of the school, it should contain enough wholesome and instructive general literature for young and old of the entire district. If such a library has not the power to create and foster the reading habit among the patrons of the school, there is something wrong with the library or with its administration. Country people need more and better reading than they have enjoyed in the past, and the school library can easily make this accessible. The new rural school must do a real service in this field.

The term "minor features" is perhaps a misnomer for some of the less conspicuous but nevertheless essential

features of a good school building. Among these may be classed the following: a principal's office, a teachers' rest room, wardrobes for the assembly room and each grade room, well-lighted halls, suitable pictures and decorations, and a flag pole from which the flag should be floating, not as a legal requirement of the state, but as a sign of the patriotic spirit and teaching within. These, and others, are necessary and vital elements of the complex school plant which we have called the complete consolidated school.

Minor features

The gross negligence on the part of teachers and janitors so frequently seen in the care of school buildings and school property, and the vandalism practiced by the older pupils in the handling of books and apparatus, is a serious indictment of school people as public servants; and the wrong committed is by no means confined to the rural schools alone. We teachers need a new conception of our duty in this matter and ought to feel the same responsibility for the custody of public property that the average man feels as custodian of his private property. Janitors put in charge of a school building should certainly be held responsible for the following: (1) having the building comfortably heated before the arrival of the pupils in the morning and maintaining an even temperature throughout the day; (2) sweeping all halls and classrooms daily and dusting the furniture after each sweeping; (3) cleaning erasers and blackboards every day; (4) scrubbing the floors and washing the woodwork once a month, and oftener if need be; (5) taking care of all apparatus and supplies; (6) making minor repairs on buildings and furniture promptly; (7) keeping wash bowls, fountains, bathrooms, and toilets scrupulously clean; and (8) looking after the grounds and keeping the walks clean both summer and winter. Failure of the jani-

Care of building and equipment

tor to perform promptly and efficiently these and other duties that may be delegated to him, must be charged primarily against the principal, upon whom must rest the supervision of janitors, teachers, and pupils alike. To coöperate with the principal, each teacher must assume full responsibility for the care of books, furniture, and apparatus and the appearance of her own room. She should also help in the general care and oversight of the school plant when called upon or when opportunity presents itself. Finally, each pupil must be taught to respect and preserve all school property and be willing to repair any injury resulting from accident, carelessness, or willful act.

In the rural school, the responsibility for all this must naturally be borne by the teacher, in addition to the work of instruction and schoolroom management. It is small wonder that under the circumstances the young teachers especially have failed quite frequently in the performance of these manifold duties. In justice to them it should be said that usually the spirit was willing but the flesh weak.

The magnitude of the school plant in the new rural school as outlined in this chapter, and the cost of maintenance in addition to the cost of construction and equipment, will no doubt seem formidable to many country people. The important question in their mind, therefore, will be, Can all this be provided in a rural district without an unwarranted increase in taxation? This is a fair and legitimate question, and a detailed answer will be given later; but enough reliable information from hundreds of consolidated schools is now available to show that the increase in school taxes in first-class consolidations as here described has been much less than most people anticipated. There is ample proof today that such schools are possible in practically every progressive and prosperous rural community having the necessary territory and a fairly good system of roads.

# CHAPTER SIX

## The Curriculum of the School

THE evolution of the human race, viewed in toto, is a remarkable spectacle. From the cave man's domicile to the fifty-sixth story of a modern metropolitan skyscraper is a stretch of the imagination that severely tests the powers of many a mind, and yet every day adds to the wonder of the achievement. As a people, we are a long way still from the summit of civilization's mountain, and the procession is steadily winding up its slopes, leaving the stragglers to fall by the wayside.

Social progress and changing ideals and aims in education

Individuals who are slow to discern this evolution of the race need to be constantly reminded of the never ceasing struggle of man for nobler achievements in order to bring their lives into harmony with humanity's aims and ambitions and to fit their steps to the march of the ages lest they obstruct or impede its progress by their lack of understanding or obstinate resistance. Past changes have been many and profound, but if modern life exhibits one chief characteristic, it is the tendency toward whirlwind changes in human relationship and the scramble of society to adjust itself to the new conditions.

Figuratively speaking, the human family is in a ferment. Mind and body are feverishly active, not passive; living, not dead. We have not only learned to adjust ourselves passively to a natural environment, but have learned to transcend and re-create that environment to serve our growing needs and desires. Naturally, in such an ever changing social order which is constantly modifying its ideals of moral and ethical life, there can be no stable formula for popular education. At best we can merely lay down broad principles and rules by which to evaluate

our educational creeds and practices. On what, then, shall they be based?

**Existing educational creeds**

The old Spartan philosophy that the individual existed solely for the benefit of the state has been discarded, and with it must vanish the rule of kings and potentates. On the opposite theory, that the state exists for the benefit of the individual, rest the claims of republics and democracies. Hence, if popular education in our country is to be justified at all, we must justify it on this theory. Nevertheless, both these conceptions of the function of the state demand trained and efficient individuals, but for diametrically opposite purposes. In the one case the individual's well-being counts for naught except to glorify the state and its leaders, while in the other the state is made efficient for the express purpose of promoting the well-being of all its citizens. In addition, we must not forget that man is by nature a gregarious animal, a social being, whose happiness depends upon the well-being and happiness of the state and society. Therefore, an intimate interrelation exists between the individual and the state, and neither can prosper without the other. Consequently, the best possible education is that which will give the individual the greatest amount of freedom consistent with the highest good and welfare of society. On this principle we may judge the value of some of the modern conceptions of education as formulated by eminent thinkers.

1. There are many who still hold the old Greek idea of education — *the harmonious development of all the powers and capabilities of the individual.* Followed to its logical conclusion, it centers completely in the individual. It is narrow, and leaves out of consideration the second factor, society. An individual so trained, but unwilling to use

his powers for the welfare of society, is a poor asset to the state.

2. We have those who think of education primarily as *culture.* The main fault with this school of educators has been the reliance on facts from a dead past. Instead of turning their eyes to the future, they fix them on the past and fill the mind with data that have little or no bearing on the course ahead, where our real interests lie. The lessons of our yesterdays are valueless except for use and guidance in our tomorrows. "Knowledge for its own sake" may be good ballast but is poor cargo.

3. Education has also been conceived as *habit formation,* and the disciples of this idea lay great stress upon "learning to do by doing." The results of this training are, in the main, commendable. Such people look to the future instead of the past and emphasize utility. But the system is in danger of producing automatons rather than rational beings. In our *doing* we must not forget our *thinking.* Reason is greater than habit.

4. Another class of educators has rallied around the cry, *Education for social efficiency.* They value the individual only as a member of society, and whatever he does in life that does not contribute directly to the social welfare is misdirected or useless. While no one can deny the strength of their position so far as the state and society are concerned, the system has a tendency to repress the individual in his personal, idealistic, and æsthetic growth and development.

5. Perhaps the best conception of modern education and its aims that has yet been expressed is *the adjustment of the individual to his environment.* It emphasizes the two principal phases of the problem — the individual who is to be educated, and the environment in which he is to live. This environment includes the physical, the

moral, and the social, and its ever changing character has already been pointed out. If, then, education is conceived to be the adjustment to such an environment, we must naturally expect a constant change in education also, in order that it may conform to new conditions in the world about us and to new standards in life. The point of divergence between urban and rural education lies here. Where the one has been dynamic and has steadily adapted itself to an altered environment, the other has been static and traditional. The new rural school must, therefore, have the new educational aim — that of adjusting our boys and girls to their present environment and of developing them into the highest type of manhood and womanhood, physically, mentally, and morally. This demands some radical reforms and readjustments of present practices.

**Subject matter of curriculum**

A reconstructed curriculum for the rural schools is one of the first demands. While the subjects taught in the country school will not, and should not, differ greatly from those taught in the city school, they must be redirected and made more distinctly applicable to farm life. Much of the content of the old course that is useless or of little moment may be eliminated entirely; and in other studies the emphasis must be shifted to the vital and practical interests of every-day life. The following subjects are entitled to thoughtful consideration in planning a course of study for country schools: reading, language and literature, arithmetic, history and citizenship, geography, music, drawing, writing, spelling, sanitation and hygiene, and industrial work. Included in the last-named subject should be primary handwork, agriculture, manual training, sewing, cooking, and home management. Only brief comments can be given on each subject enumerated, but the list

itself indicates how different this program is bound to be from the traditional one-room school curriculum.

That even the one-teacher schools have made attempts in the last few years to incorporate some, or all, of the above-mentioned subjects in their course of study is true, and in some cases they have succeeded admirably under the disheartening conditions commonly found; but in spite of formal legislation, or urgent pleas from county and district superintendents to make room for the new studies, the one-teacher school finds itself helpless to cope with the situation, no matter how well prepared the teacher may be. All country teachers should, however, clearly understand the problem which faces the rural school. Some adjustment along the new lines is possible in every school, and rural teachers should make such modest beginnings in industrial work as their limited time and meager facilities will permit.

**Time saving and correlation of subjects**

To introduce a host of new subjects into the school curriculum and at the same time guard the teacher and pupils against overcrowding because of the expansion and enrichment of the course of study, which now contains twice or three times the amount of subject matter formerly taught, we must carefully conserve the time of both teacher and pupils and employ school hours to the best possible advantage. This can be accomplished in two ways; first, by purging the several subjects of useless, impractical, and dead matter on which many weary hours were wasted under the old régime; and second, by correlation of subjects that have many things in common and dovetail into each other, so to speak. This idea is made clear by the alterations suggested for the various subjects.

Up to the middle of the second year of the child's school life, his number work should be confined to the getting and

fixing of simple number conceptions, learning to count, and the reading and writing of numbers. If the fundamental operations in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division in whole numbers, fractions, and decimals are then thoroughly drilled upon in the next few years, "the mechanics in arithmetic" will need little attention thereafter except for brief and rapid reviews. This leaves the pupil free to center his future attention upon the logical analysis of practical problems likely to come within his business career of later life. By a wise choice of textbooks, containing the desired material, or by the teacher's own ingenuity and ability to construct problems in farm accounting, poultry raising, buying and selling of stock, crop production, soil surveys, household management, modern business practices in the lending of money and similar enterprises, enough arithmetic can be learned by the average child in half or two thirds of the time that was formerly allotted to arithmetic in the country schools. What is more, such work correlates expressly with the pupil's other studies and is shorn of the "useless lumber" crowded into the old-time arithmetics. It should also be plain that the problem material in arithmetic for country children will differ greatly from that which is suitable for city children, and many textbooks may have to be entirely rewritten to meet the new demand.

Arithmetic

Formal grammar, when presented to immature minds, is of little value in the learning of a language, and its hard and dry logic and the discouraging mass of rules and classifications are exceedingly depressing. It should either be entirely eliminated from the curriculum of the elementary rural school or presented in greatly simplified form during the eighth grade only. The proper substitute for grammar is live language

Grammar

lessons, dealing with familiar objects, scenes, stories, and experiences within the pupil's comprehension and knowledge. So important is drill in language or composition, both written and oral, to students of all grades that some form of it, suited to the age and attainment of the pupil, should run through every department of the public school from kindergarten to college.

History

In kindling the flame of patriotism and in filling the minds and hearts of our young citizens with pride and love for country and for the blessings of liberty in a free land, the subject of history stands supreme. But it took the stern realities and the fearful calamities of a destructive world war, into which we were drawn reluctantly, to teach the American people how far they had fallen short in welding their citizens into one homogeneous nation. Had our school teachers been as diligent to extol the deeds of our heroic men and women and inspire our youth with a true regard for the lofty ideals of American liberty and equality as the schoolmasters of our efficient adversaries, the Germans, have been in glorifying the past history and achievements of Germany and her rulers, the unfaltering loyalty of every citizen would never have been questioned when we entered the great conflict. Our signal failure to place full value upon the brilliant record of America's fight for freedom and democracy in our teaching of history and citizenship is now apparent to all. Not a moment should be lost in rectifying this grave error, and there are hopeful signs that we are fully awake to the situation. Time and occasion were never more propitious for a rebirth of national life and a new Americanism whose spirit shall not abate until every vestige of sectionalism and alien thought is wiped out forever. There is need of cleansing "the American melting pot" to make us an undivided

and indivisible nation, and in this task the school teachers must be the chief actors.

The teaching of history should, therefore, receive more thoughtful consideration. By means of a carefully planned course, beginning with fascinating stories of our great men and women in the days of exploration, colonization, struggle for independence, and nation building — told to the primary children in forceful but simple language — we can lead them on to more extensive biographies of national heroes which all children love to hear and read. This forms an ideal background for later historical reading and study. It develops in the young boy or girl a sense of pride and sympathetic interest in those who have made our country what it is and gives them the keynote to patriotism and citizenship. Great care must be taken, however, that these larger aims of history shall not be smothered with tiresome details and chronological sequence of historical events. Even in the formal study of history in the seventh and eighth grades, real, vital history must not be confused with the learning of long lists of dates, the tracing of military campaigns, and the making of skeleton outlines to show the events of presidential administrations. The meat of the subject is the big, stirring events dealing with the lives, deeds, and aspirations of individuals who, in turn, mold the life of the nation. To them we must look for the real milestones of progress. When studied in this light, and when seen in its true relationship to the great historical movements of Europe and the rest of the world, American history becomes at once delightful and illuminating and a powerful factor in the character formation of the student.

The gist of geography is man in all the complex relationship to his home — the great, wide world. Every factor, therefore, that has an important bearing on

the modification of his home and the life within it, has a place in the study of geography; but the magnitude of the subject has led to no end of abuse in weighing it down with a mass of trivial and useless information. No subject offers a greater opportunity for effective correlation of school work on the one hand, and for the saving of time by the elimination of memoriter, mental gymnastics on the other. When led by a skillful teacher from the known of local geography to the unknown of state, national, and world relationship of people, the child will pursue the subject with keen delight and fascination; but in the hands of a plodding teacher, grinding away on the old "book geography," the study becomes the most useless, aimless, and monotonous of the curriculum. Nowhere else is the discrimination, alertness, and resourcefulness of the intermediate or grammar grade teacher more fruitful of results than in the teaching of geography.

Geography

The country is the most appropriate place for field work in geography because an abundance of material lies right outside the door of the rural school, but the timidity of teachers and the fear of neighborhood criticism for inaugurating something new has kept many a good teacher and bright geography class strictly within the four walls of the schoolroom when a little excursion into the open would have revealed a mine of first-hand information that no textbook can adequately convey to the mind of the child. Here is another wonderful opportunity for the new rural school. The intimate interrelation existing between geography and such subjects as agriculture, history, language, and the natural sciences is too obvious for discussion.

During the first three years of school life reading deserves to occupy the place of preëminence in the curriculum. Until children have acquired the ability to read

rapidly and well, proficiency in history, geography, language, problem solving in arithmetic, and many other lines of study is out of the question. It should also be clearly understood that good reading means not only thought getting from the printed page, but power and insight to weigh the values of good reading material. It means thoughtful discrimination between good books and poor ones, and the final goal must be the acquisition of a taste for good reading and the fixing of the reading habit for life. Perhaps more failures in the academic work of elementary and high school pupils can be justly attributed to poor preparation in reading than to any other single cause. Lack of foundation in phonics, not enough drill in oral reading and expression in the primary grades, and little or no dictionary work in the intermediate grades are the three chief causes of poor reading.

**Reading**

Work in phonics is essential to make self-reliant readers. It furnishes the child with a key that unlocks the secret to the pronunciation of a host of new words. Since more than four fifths of the words in the English language are phonetic, no primary teacher can afford to slight the subject, and children should have daily drills in phonics soon after they enter school. By following up the phonic drills in the primary grades with thorough dictionary training in the intermediate grades, two formidable stumbling blocks to good reading are removed. The third problem is how to get more time for oral class reading and expression. It is not uncommon to find reading classes in rural schools that have but one or two minutes daily per pupil devoted to oral reading. This means that a pupil has actual practice in oral reading for about three to six hours in a school term of eight months. How absurd to think that any teacher could make proficient

readers out of pupils under such conditions! Now add to this handicap a dearth of reading books, as a result of which a single book is made to serve a pupil for the entire school year and the selections are read and re-read and the book is reviewed and re-reviewed until every page is worn threadbare and the interest in every story is buried beyond all hope of resurrection, and you have a combination for stultifying the young mind which can hardly be surpassed.

Fortunately, this type of country school is now rare in the progressive districts, but there are still thousands of rural districts where this very thing is going on because penny-wise and pound-foolish school boards are trying to keep down taxes by curtailing the supply of necessary textbooks. A good supply of supplementary readers should be found in every school. With ample time devoted to reading in a well-graded school, a bright class can and should read from half a dozen to a dozen interesting and instructive books each year. Exceptional teachers have been known to cover as many as twenty-five or thirty supplementary readers a year with a bright class.

**Health lessons**

About the only redeeming feature of the old-fashioned textbook physiology was its crusade against the use of intoxicating liquor. In every other respect its contents were dry and deadening and mostly beyond the comprehension of grade children. In the modern form of personal and public hygiene, however, it has much practical value. The proper function of the study of hygiene and sanitation in the elementary school is to teach the basic facts of schoolroom ventilation; danger of contamination to water or milk supply; ordinary diseases of eyes, ears, nose, throat, and lungs; childhood afflictions like adenoids, diseased tonsils, measles, and mumps; bathing and personal cleanliness; and simi-

lar topics. All formal work in physiology or anatomy should be deferred until the pupil reaches the high school, where the subject may be correlated with other natural sciences.

Civics

According to the late E. T. Fairchild, president of the Agricultural College of New Hampshire, less than twenty-five per cent of the rural school children are completing the work of the grades. If this be true, the duty of teaching at least the rudiments of civil government in the grades of the rural school becomes imperative. The appalling ignorance concerning the operation of our government which is displayed by thousands of male voters, not only in marking the ballot on election day but in the discussion of the simplest political and economic issues, is proof that we must continue to teach civil government in the grades until a larger percentage of our pupils can be instructed in this subject in the high school. Grammar grade pupils cannot hope to study civil government in detail because of the philosophic and difficult nature of the subject; but they can get a grasp of the general functions of the national government in connection with their study of history and may also learn enough of the workings of county, municipal, and state government to have some elementary conception of the duties of a good citizen toward state and nation. No one should be allowed to graduate from a high school who has not taken a substantial course in civics, whether it be given with senior American history or separately. The quality of our citizenship will not be greatly improved until every child gets at least a fair insight into the working, aim, and object of our government; and a democracy cannot be made socially or economically efficient until it is loyally supported by an intelligent and trained citizenship.

In spite of the common use of the typewriter today, the person who writes a neat, legible, flowing hand has a great advantage in securing and retaining a business position over the one who is deficient in penmanship. If the public knew how many men and women are daily weighed in the balance of the commercial world by the appearance of a letter of application, the value of good handwriting would be greatly enhanced in their estimation. But good handwriting is a social as well as a business asset, and therefore the subject of penmanship will continue to remain an important one in the elementary course of study. A daily writing lesson of not less than fifteen minutes, under the intelligent direction of the teacher, ought to be the minimum essential in penmanship for all grades. Where time permits, thirty or forty minutes a day should be devoted to the subject.

**Penmanship**

The recent revival in spelling, as evidenced by the large number of local and state-wide contests, is commendable. The further fact that oral and written work have received equal recognition in most of these contests proves that we have learned to value both phases of the subject. To arouse interest in oral spelling is comparatively easy, and this accounts in a measure for the popularity of the old-time "spelling bees"; but in everyday life, written spelling is of far greater service than oral. However, children should use both the oral and the written method of studying spelling, not only to add variety and interest to the work, but because some children are naturally eye-minded while others are ear-minded. The former get their spelling lessons more easily by seeing the words in the written or printed form, while the latter fix them in their minds by listening to them as they are being spelled aloud.

**Spelling**

Some years ago the educational pendulum swung away from the subject of spelling and a few extremists advocated the discarding of all spelling books and of making the teaching of spelling incidental to the rest of the school work. The folly of this idea has now been sufficiently demonstrated, and it is generally conceded that regular daily lessons in spelling from good textbooks is the proper course to pursue. Special teaching devices in the form of games and contests are exceedingly helpful in breaking the monotony of the study and adding zest and interest.

**Music, drawing, literature, and art**

The subjects of music, drawing, literature, and art are grouped here because all of them appeal to the æsthetic nature of children. Their principal mission is inspiration, appreciation of things moral and spiritual, the enjoyment of life's beauty, and the expression of the most sacred feelings and emotions of the soul. The pity is that we have so long been compelled to pass them by lightly in the country school because of existing conditions. The one-room school could offer little in this line for lack of time, lack of qualified instructors, and other reasons; but in the consolidated school, with some chance for specialization, they will play a large part in the education of every child. Their influence on adult as well as child life can hardly be overestimated. Country homes and the country community are entitled to enjoy these blessings, and rural America will continue to be seriously handicapped by their absence until the doors of the new rural school can be thrown open wide to this training of man's higher nature.

**Industrial education**

That we have been able, in the last twenty-five years, to revolutionize educational ideals in practically all our urban centers by creating a public sentiment which puts industrial and vocational training on a par with the traditional, so-called "cultural educa-

tion," is a triumph for democracy and a tribute to the nation. It means that as a people we have come to regard the ability to make a living in accordance with American standards, and the making of some distinct personal contribution to the world's industries, just as valuable and honorable as the training for a profession or for a life of leisure and enjoyment. It would seem strange indeed if now the rural communities, in which industrial training finds its greatest opportunity for service, should long continue to lag behind and stick to its "bookish schools," the legacy of a former age and condition; but the practical difficulties to overcome in making this change in the rural districts are formidable.

Theoretically, it ought to be an easy matter to convince every farmer of the necessity for a change in the rural school curriculum and for the introduction of such subjects as agriculture, manual training, household economy, and the like into all schools, but the complete reorganization of the school system and the added expense connected with such a program are frowned upon and meet with stubborn resistance. The new conception of the rural school is nothing less than the complete transformation of a system that has scarcely been altered for a century; and even with a thoroughgoing campaign of education and enlightenment, progress must needs be slow. The magnitude of the problem is not yet sufficiently understood and appreciated by thousands of wide-awake educational leaders, to say nothing of the laymen who have had less opportunity to probe the subject at close range. Our greatest obstacle is to overcome the inertia of a vast rural population, conservative by nature and reluctant to adopt new standards. When the consolidated school has finally come to stay and has attained its logical development, the following important indus-

trial subjects will be prominent features of its course of study: agriculture, manual training (including woodwork and blacksmithing), sewing, cooking, household management, and home projects. The school will also play a leading part in the promotion of rural health and of clean sport and recreation. These two topics will receive attention in succeeding chapters; but a brief outline of the industrial subjects will indicate their scope and usefulness.

Agriculture

Rural life centers about the country home and in the one great rural industry, agriculture. Therefore, the farmer's big, vital problem is how to make his country home the happiest and best possible place to dwell in while engaged in his life work, and how to make agriculture profitable, enjoyable, and capable of supporting the right kind of a home. That for this reason agriculture is the logical subject around which to build the rural school curriculum, is self-evident. The question that remains is, What should the study of agriculture embrace and how should the other subjects correlate with it?

To begin with, a strong course of nature study should run through the grades and blend into the formal, intensive, and scientific study of agriculture in the eighth grade and the rural high school. The particular mission of this nature study is to open the minds and eyes of the young to the wonders of their environment and to the golden opportunity for first-hand observation and lessons in soils, plant and animal life, and a host of natural phenomena with which they come in daily contact. The possibilities of the study are infinite and of absorbing interest, and the trained teacher will find nature study an effective means for converting a "dead school" into one that is very much alive. To supplement the work

of the school and make it directly applicable to the child's home life, the planting and care of flower beds, bird study and bird protection, home gardening, weed control, and similar activities, all fall within the scope of the elementary grades. In the grammar grades and high school the work should expand into and embrace general agriculture, field crops, animal husbandry, horticulture, and soils. Both laboratory and field work should be given prominence throughout the course. According to the particular interest of the community, emphasis must be laid upon its specialty, like fruit raising, grain or cotton culture, or other lines of community endeavor in which the majority of the farmers may be engaged or which may be especially adapted to the locality. This conforms to the broad educational principle that the schools of a community must adjust its citizens to the life of that community.

In every consolidated school worthy of the name, a workshop in manual training is indispensable. The modern farm with its variety of machinery, tools, special types of buildings, drainage systems, concrete construction work, etc., taxes the ingenuity of the farmer to keep things in proper repair and calls for a deftness of hand and no end of originality and self-confidence. Therefore, a thorough course in manual training is highly desirable and useful. The work attempted may embrace rope tying and splicing, the care and sharpening of tools, harness and leather work, concrete construction, the elements of blacksmithing, and the making of ordinary repairs on buildings. The older boys, who have mastered the underlying principles of manual training, should branch out into project work and construct chicken coops and brooders, seed-corn racks, feeding racks for stock, hay racks, wagon

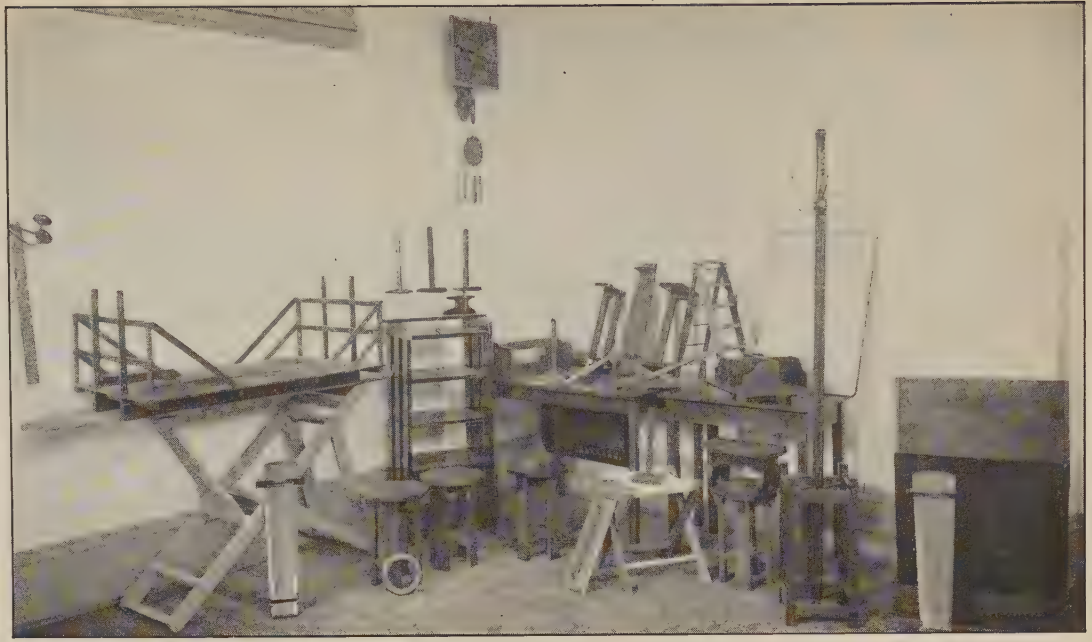
Manual training

boxes, home furniture, and similar articles commonly found on the farm and in the home but not too difficult to make. The list is merely suggestive and will vary with school or community or with the season of the year. No country school should make the error of patterning its manual-training course after that of the average city or town school. The underlying principles are the same for each course, but the applications differ widely.

While the country girls, like the country boys, should have good training in the elements of agriculture, the distinctive field of the girls along industrial lines is the art of home making, embracing such branches as sewing, cooking, and home management. To furnish the proper facilities for this work, a well-equipped domestic-science and sewing department is as necessary for them as the manual-training shop is for the boys. The equipment need not be elaborate or expensive, but should at least be on a par with the facilities for work of this kind found in the better rural homes and may even be somewhat in advance of them in order to impress upon the community the need of lightening the burdens of the average farm home. The farm kitchen deserves to share more generally in the blessings of labor-saving devices so commonly found outside the home but not sufficiently appreciated inside it. A little investment in home comforts and conveniences adds more good cheer and contentment to farm life than any costly out-of-door machinery could possibly do. A feature of the work done by the cooking class should be the preparation of hot lunches for all pupils at the noon hour.

**Sewing, cooking, and home management**

Curiously, some people have a very erroneous notion of this so-called "hot lunch" idea. It is perhaps more extensively developed in Minnesota than in any other state; it is demanded of every consolidated school of



Work of boys' manual-training class in consolidated rural high school at Kerkhoven, Minnesota

the state between November 1 and April 1 of each school year. It is a phase of practical hygiene and consists of the serving of some hot dish at the noon hour with the usual cold lunch which the pupil brings with him from home. The hot lunch may consist of vegetable soup, baked potatoes, a dish of rice, and a cup of cocoa or other hot drink. Experience has proved that the cost of such a dish is negligible as compared with the enjoyment and benefit to the children. To see a hundred or more children thus gathered about a big community table, eating their lunch together and learning valuable lessons of table etiquette and social intercourse, makes a profound impression upon an observer. Generally speaking, people have not yet grasped the full significance of the hot lunch in the rural school; but there is wisdom and method in a state-wide requirement for serving hot lunches in every consolidated school.

Opposition to industrial work

Prejudice against the teaching of industrial subjects in the country school has been very pronounced, and when we consider the utter unadaptability of the one-room school for this work, no one can wonder at the situation. In the first place, the buildings already constructed have no conveniences for industrial work, and their remodeling to give adequate facilities would be nearly as costly as new buildings. In the second place, to undertake the industrial work here outlined in addition to the usual work of a one-teacher school is plainly impossible, even if the room and facilities were at hand. It would necessitate the hiring of another teacher for the small number of pupils found in the average country school. This would be extremely wasteful and foolish when the consolidated school solves the problem so admirably. Outside the consolidated school, therefore, industrial educa-

tion in the country school will be negligible and of small value when attempted; but, given the facilities of the consolidated school and specially trained teachers for the various branches, it will have a far-reaching effect upon rural education. Under those conditions, opposition to industrial work will be short-lived. There is no doubt that industrial and vocational training are destined to be leading factors in revitalizing, redirecting, and reorganizing the rural school.

**The time element for recitation and instruction**

Nothing can demonstrate more vividly the restricted opportunities of teacher and pupils in the one-teacher school than the available time for recitation and instruction in each grade. A glance at the accompanying sample programs of recitation will make this clear. The one represents the conditions in a one-room school with an enrollment of twenty-five to thirty-five pupils, distributed over the usual eight grades of the elementary school, while the other shows the program of the seventh and eighth grades of the grammar department in a consolidated school with five teachers. This school is fully equipped for industrial work and offers two years of high school training beyond the grades.

Dividing the 330 minutes that the one-room school is actually in session from 9 A.M. until 4 P.M. by the number of periods, gives approximately nine minutes per period; but at least one minute must be allowed in such a school for the changing of classes and the hurried direction of seat work between periods. Therefore an average of eight minutes per period is the maximum time available for recitation and instruction. This arrangement affords a total of about fifty minutes daily for recitation and instruction in each grade. If the fifty minutes are deducted from the total of 330 minutes, it leaves 280 minutes

per class for study and dreary waiting for the next recitations. No one will have the temerity to assert that effective instruction is possible under such conditions even if the teacher have every lesson well in hand and is fully capable of teaching it. But what teacher could possibly prepare for thirty-five daily recitations and keep it up month after month?

Some may contend that this program of thirty-five daily periods is an extreme example of present-day rural school conditions; but the average number of recitations for rural schools in the United States is, by competent authority, placed at twenty-nine per day, so that a large number of teachers evidently have thirty-five or more daily recitations. This seems to be corroborated by the careful investigations of Mr. Harold W. Foght,[1] who gathered reports from fifty-five typical counties in all parts of the country, and whose inquiry revealed that 66.2 per cent of the rural teachers reporting taught eight grades or more and had from twenty-two to thirty-five or more daily recitations. Furthermore, since 937 schools of the 2874 reporting had more than one teacher, it is quite probable that the larger one-teacher schools with twenty-five or more pupils enrolled had an average of thirty-five or more daily recitations, even if no industrial work were undertaken and the course of study were limited to the subjects listed on the sample program presented on the following page.

On the other hand, the program representing the work of the seventh and eighth grades of the consolidated school shows but fourteen daily periods, with a total of 315 minutes of actual school work from 9 A.M. till 3.30 P.M.

[1] See Bulletin No. 49, 1914, United States Bureau of Education, on "Efficiency and Preparation of Rural School Teachers," by Harold W. Foght.

## Illustration of Injustice of Unequal Opportunity Suffered by Pupils of One-room Country School as Compared with Pupils in Village Graded and Consolidated Schools

### TYPICAL DAILY PROGRAM OF RECITATIONS IN ONE-ROOM RURAL SCHOOL GRADES ONE TO EIGHT, INCLUSIVE

| TIME A.M. | MINUTES | SUBJECT | GRADES |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.00– 9.10 | 10 | Opening exercises | All |
| 9.10– 9.20 | 10 | Word drills in reading classes | All |
| 9.20– 9.25 | 5 | Reading | 1st |
| 9.25– 9.35 | 10 | Reading | 2d |
| 9.35– 9.45 | 10 | Reading | 3d |
| 9.45– 9.55 | 10 | Reading | 4th |
| 9.55–10.05 | 10 | Reading | 5th and 6th |
| 10.05–10.15 | 10 | Phonics | First three |
| 10.15–10.30 | 15 | Arithmetic | 7th and 8th |
| Recess | | | |
| 10.45–10.55 | 10 | Numbers | 1st and 2d |
| 10.55–11.05 | 10 | Arithmetic | 3d |
| 11.05–11.15 | 10 | Arithmetic | 4th |
| 11.15–11.20 | 5 | Story-telling | 1st and 2d |
| 11.20–11.30 | 10 | Arithmetic | 5th and 6th |
| 11.30–11.40 | 10 | Grammar | 8th |
| 11.40–11.50 | 10 | Language | 6th and 7th |
| 11.50–12.00 | 10 | Writing | All |
| Noon Intermission | | | |
| TIME P.M. | | | |
| 1.00– 1.10 | 10 | Language | 3d |
| 1.10– 1.20 | 10 | Language | 4th and 5th |
| 1.20– 1.30 | 10 | Reading | 1st |
| 1.30– 1.40 | 10 | Reading | 2d |
| 1.40– 1.50 | 10 | Elementary physiology | 6th and 7th |
| 1.50– 2.00 | 10 | Civics | 8th |
| 2.00– 2.10 | 10 | Home geography | 3d and 4th |
| 2.10– 2.20 | 10 | Geography | 5th and 6th |
| 2.20– 2.30 | 10 | Geography | 7th and 8th |
| Recess | | | |
| 2.45– 2.50 | 5 | Primary industrial work | 1st and 2d |
| 2.50– 3.00 | 10 | History | 8th |
| 3.00– 3.10 | 10 | History | 6th and 7th |
| 3.10– 3.20 | 10 | History stories | 4th and 5th |
| 3.20– 3.30 | 10 | Reading | 7th and 8th |
| 3.30– 3.40 | 10 | Word drill and spelling | 1st and 2d |
| 3.40– 3.45 | 5 | Spelling | 3d |
| 3.45– 3.50 | 5 | Spelling | 4th |
| 3.50– 3.55 | 5 | Spelling | 5th and 6th |
| 3.55– 4.00 | 5 | Spelling | 7th and 8th |

CONSOLIDATED SCHOOL PROGRAM, GRAMMAR DEPARTMENT
GRADES SEVEN AND EIGHT

| TIME A.M. | MINUTES | SUBJECT | GRADES |
|---|---|---|---|
| 9.00– 9.15 | 15 | Opening exercises and current events | Both |
| 9.15– 9.40 | 25 | Arithmetic | 8th |
| 9.40–10.05 | 25 | Arithmetic | 7th |
| 10.05–10.30 | 25 | Agriculture | 8th |
| Recess | | | |
| 10.45–11.10 | 25 | Language | 7th |
| 11.10–11.35 | 25 | History and civics | 8th |
| 11.35–11.45 | 10 | Spelling | Both |
| 11.45–12.00 | 15 | Writing | Both |
| Noon Intermission | | | |
| TIME P.M. | | | |
| 1.00– 1.25 | 25 | Geography | 7th |
| 1.25– 1.50 | 25 | Grammar and composition | 8th |
| 1.50– 2.15 | 25 | History | 7th |
| 2.15– 2.30 | 15 | Music or drawing | Both |
| 2.30– 2.55 | 25 | Reading | Both |
| 2.55– 3.30 | 35 | Manual training<br>Domestic science | Boys<br>Girls |

Instead of having fifty minutes out of 330 per day for each grade devoted to recitation and instruction, this program provides for 200 minutes per day for each grade out of a total of 315 minutes during which the school is actually in session. Moreover, the similarity of the work in these two grades makes the teacher's task less difficult, and enables her to make preparation for each lesson, to say nothing of the student's opportunity for industrial work and inspirational subjects like music, drawing, etc., taught by special teachers. A little thoughtful study of this comparison should convince the most radical opponent of the consolidated school that its advantages over the one-teacher school are tremendous. Although this particular comparison is made between the grammar department of the consolidated school and the one-room

school, it is equally striking for other departments. Since the high school facilities in the one-room school are entirely lacking, it makes the discrepancy still greater between the two classes when this is taken into account.

The program for the one-room school given on page 88 is neither the best nor the worst followed by rural teachers of today. It shows at least some ability in the teacher to combine classes and economize time, but whether the average country teacher would be able to make still further combinations and reduce the number of recitations without bungling the recitations is doubtful. There are many superintendents and program manufacturers who insist that we must have more alternation of subjects and combination of classes, and some even go so far as to advocate that the eight grades of a country school be divided into three or four "divisions" of two or three grades each, in order that recitation periods may be lengthened.

There is just one fault to find with this proposition. It demands expert teachers to put them into practice. To combine pupils of different ages and abilities into a single class and try to teach such a class the same lessons, taxes the wits of the most skillful superintendents; and to hear two or three lessons simultaneously, except in such a subject as spelling, is not a trick to be tried by a novice in education, as most country teachers are.

Such programs work beautifully — on paper and in the office of the superintendent; but they are seldom successful in the schoolroom unless in the hands of a master teacher. For the average country teacher it is safer to trust her "shoestring" program of thirty-five daily recitations than to attempt a highly complex combination of classes or alternation of subjects — unless she has been thoroughly trained in the working of such a program by an expert supervisor.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### The Rural High School

ACCORDING to the Federal Bureau of Education the high school enrollment has more than doubled between the years of 1902 and 1915.[1] Out of a total enrollment of nearly 20,000,000 children in the elementary and secondary schools of the United States, the aggregate high school enrollment for 1915 was 1,484,028. This marvelous growth of secondary education is gratifying indeed; but unfortunately the blessings of high school training are almost entirely confined to city and village children. No statistics are available to show just what proportion of the 1,484,028 high school students in 1915 actually resided on the farm; but it is safe to say that less than ten per cent were really country boys and girls. Until recently the high school has been looked upon as beyond the reach of the rural community; but, in fact, the rural child needs high school training fully as much as the urban child, if not more so. The high school is not a luxury to the country community, but a necessity. The problem is, how to bring it to the country boy and girl. It must come straight to the door of rural people and not be a "remote institution" or boarding school. Various expedients, short of consolidation, have been tried in a number of states to place high schools within reach of the country child, with invariably the same result — they reach but a small fraction of the children and must remain temporary expedients.

The growth of secondary education

Perhaps the nearest approach to the building up of bona fide rural high schools outside the consolidated school is the township high school. Illinois easily ranks

[1] Report of United States Bureau of Education, 1916, Vol. I, page 107.

first among the states of this country as an exponent of the township high school system. Even as far back as 1867 she established her first township high school by special charter, at Princeton. Later, in 1872, a state-wide law was enacted making such schools possible in every township of the state. This law was again amended in 1911 to permit the formation of township high school districts without regard to township or county lines. Under the several provisions, 120 township high school districts had been established by 1916. They vary in size from 30 sections of land to 130 sections.

Township and county high schools

The legislature of 1917 passed a still more sweeping act for the establishment of so-called community high school districts, which can be formed easily about a convenient community center and may be carved from one or more existing high school or non-high-school districts. The same legislature provided further that the territory in each county lying outside of established high school districts should be converted into, and be known as, a non-high-school district. This is governed by a board of five members, who have power to levy a sufficient tax on the territory to pay the full tuition of any eighth-grade graduate of the non-high-school district attending a neighboring high school.

These several acts, theoretically, open up every high school in Illinois, free of tuition, to any boy or girl in the state; but they leave the important question of transportation unsolved, and many country points are too remote from a high school to derive much real benefit from the system. The plan has the further drawback for country people that nearly all the high schools are located in cities or villages and cannot be classed as bona fide rural high schools, specifically adapted for the training

of country boys and girls. The system, finally, acts as a check upon real consolidation, as Illinois plainly demonstrates, for of all the important agricultural states, no other is so far behind the procession in rural school consolidation. Though the high schools have opened their doors to the rural school graduate, the country pupil below the high school is still condemned to suffer the inconveniences and shortcomings of the one-room school. For the rural people, such high schools are mere temporary expedients, and complete consolidated schools should be placed in every rural community as fast as readjustments can be made.

County high schools, as their name implies, are secondary schools established or designated to furnish high school training for common school graduates of a county not residing in local high school districts. Their mission is identical with that of the township high schools just described; but since they are supported by a county-wide tax and serve a larger area, they may more frequently be built in the open country than the township high schools. Where this is the case, they have the proper rural atmosphere and minister directly to the wants of rural communities; but since they are still more remote from the country homes than the township high schools, they minister to a smaller number of pupils than the latter. They find favor, however, in sparsely settled counties which are as yet unable to support consolidated rural high schools. Nebraska has established a large number of county high schools within the last few years.

Minnesota has no township or county high schools, but opens up every local high school, free of tuition, to all the children of the state who have graduated from the eighth grade. To compensate the local school for thus educating non-resident pupils, the state offers liberal annual aid

to each accredited school from its general revenue fund. This aid varies from a minimum of $1800 per annum to a maximum of several thousand dollars if the school will maintain well-equipped departments in agriculture, manual training, domestic science, etc. Educational speakers often refer to this liberal state aid as the proceeds of Minnesota's magnificent permanent school fund of $30,000,000; but they are entirely mistaken about this. The income from the permanent school fund is distributed to all schools alike on the basis of school attendance and has no connection with the special state aid, which is appropriated by successive legislatures and levied on the property of the state as a direct annual tax. Other states, like Iowa, provide that rural school graduates may attend a neighboring high school and the home district will pay the tuition of such pupils up to a certain maximum. In still others, the pupil, or his parent, must pay the tuition and furnish his own conveyance to the school or seek board and room in the high school town.

**Other attempts to furnish high school training to country graduates**

These different methods of bringing the high school a little nearer to the country child have rendered valuable service in emphasizing the need of high school education for country boys and girls; but none of them solves the problem of rural secondary education. Its complete solution will be found only in the consolidated school, backed by the transportation of pupils at public expense.

The reasons why county, township, city, or village high school systems cannot adequately serve the surrounding country territory are many, but chief among them are these:

1. Only a very small number of country children live within walking distance of established high schools, and

the expense of individual, private transportation limits this method to some wealthy families living at a greater distance. Families who live more distant still, either must seek a boarding place for their children in the high school town and trust them to the care of strangers from two to four years during the most critical period of life, or the family must forsake the farm and move to town with the children during this time. Either course is almost certain to destroy the ties that bind such children to the farm and country life.

Fundamental objections to the systems enumerated

2. Village and city high schools are necessarily organized to train their pupils for other occupations than farming. Even in those schools that offer a course in agriculture, the general social life and atmosphere of the school tend towards city life and away from the farm. The boy or girl who spends four years in such surroundings is seldom content to go back to the farm, but forsakes the country permanently soon after high school graduation.

3. The principal objection to county and large district high schools is their inaccessibility. They must become boarding schools with dormitories, like the old academies or modern colleges; but even under responsible and intelligent management a dormitory cannot take the place of home and the family circle during the high school age of boys and girls. Furthermore, few farmers would or could bear the expense of such training at a distant school, or would assume the risk for their children's moral safety. Naturally, all children below the age of eighteen years should be educated near home and should be at home with their parents at night. Finally, children should remain in daily contact with actual farm life during the formative period when approaching young manhood or womanhood. It is then that home life makes its deepest

impressions. Boarding schools are not democratic institutions. They are for the classes rather than the masses.

Under exceptional conditions, county or large district high schools will serve a useful purpose for many years to come. Where the obstacles to complete consolidation are too formidable at present, the county high schools must be the chief factor in bringing limited high school training to the rural districts. This is the situation in many of the sparsely settled and impoverished sections of the Southern states, where the separate schools for the two races augment the difficulty of providing high schools for country children. The South faces a school problem in many sections that is wholly unappreciated or unknown in the rest of the country; and her people must find, for the time being at least, a different solution for the country schools. Fully realizing this, the state of North Carolina has worked out a system of Farm Life Schools,[1] a type of rural secondary schools that serve large areas and are particularly adapted to that section. The schools are intensely practical and lay great stress upon agriculture and industrial training generally. Their influence on the rural population has been marked.

**Rural secondary schools in the South**

Georgia is reaping similar benefits from her congressional-district agricultural high schools, Mississippi and others from their county high schools, while still others, like Virginia and Tennessee, give liberal financial aid for the teaching of agriculture and industrial work in both rural and town high schools. The trend of all these efforts is in the right direction, looking for speedy betterment of rural schools. Another peculiar problem in rural education is met in parts of certain Western states, where small

[1] For details of their course of study see H. W. Foght, *The Rural Teacher and His Work*.

communities are clustered in the irrigated valleys and separated by stretches of barren and rough territory. Here the individual settlements are too small to permit of local high schools, and large district high schools must be established to furnish the proper educational facilities. The Jordan High School near Sandy, Utah, and the Gonzales Union High School of Salinas County, California, are typical illustrations of this condition. There are also many rough mountain districts in states both East and West that must resort to this type of school to provide what limited secondary education such districts can hope to attain for years to come; but in all other rural districts the consolidated school is the logical solution.

### RURAL SCHOOL EXTENSION WORK

As the work of all schools has become more practical and vocational, their usefulness has been greatly increased and their scope extended, so that now they minister to thousands of people who have passed the school age, as well as to the children regularly enrolled in some school. This expansion of public school service has found expression in the establishment of evening schools, continuation schools, vacation schools, winter short courses, boys' and girls' club work, and all manner of agricultural extension work. In this, as in most departures from the established order in education, the colleges and urban systems took the lead because the larger systems have a distinct advantage over the small schools in working out new problems. The one-teacher school is for various reasons the least adapted for carrying out a program of extension work. In the first place, the teaching force is poorly prepared for effective instruction in special work suited to adults; and, in the second place, it would be unreasonable to expect the teacher of a one-

The field of extension work

room school to assume the heavy burden of evening classes, or other regular extension work, in addition to her arduous task while the district school is in session. For these and other reasons, we must look to the larger schools with special teachers to carry on the extension work. Only in rare cases can the district school undertake it with success.

**The problem of rural illiteracy**

In spite of the prodigious sums spent annually in the United States for education,[1] we have every reason to be ashamed of the large number of adult illiterates still found within our borders. The federal census report for 1910 showed a total of 5,516,163 persons in this country, ten years of age and over, who could neither read nor write. Fifty-eight per cent of these were native and foreign-born whites, forty per cent were negroes, and two per cent were Indians, Chinese, and Japanese.[2] Contrary to general belief, most of the illiterates are not found in the cities with their slums and colonies of foreign immigrants, but in the rural districts. Rural illiteracy in 1910 was twice as large as urban, being 10.2 per cent in the country, against 5.1 per cent in the city. For the entire nation, an average of 7.7 per cent of the population, ten years of age and over, was shown to be illiterate—a very much larger percentage than that of any leading nation of Europe. A heroic effort, taking the form of rural school extension work, has been made in recent years to remove this stain of adult illiteracy, and in this movement the one-room school has taken the lead.

The famous "moonlight schools" of Kentucky were initiated by Mrs. Cora Wilson Stewart of Rowan County,

[1] See Chapter IV, page 42.

[2] For distribution by states see Statistical Abstract of the United States for 1916, page 73.

Kentucky. Mrs. Stewart conceived the idea and established the schools for the express purpose of furnishing the vast body of adult illiterates in the mountain districts of Rowan County with at least the rudiments of an elementary education. Since enough illiterates to form suitable classes were found in the several school districts, the existing rural schools and school districts formed convenient centers for the establishment of moonlight schools. Taking advantage of these means at her command, Mrs. Stewart made a stirring appeal to the rural teachers of her county to volunteer for this noble service. A host of them responded instantly, without thought or hope of financial compensation, and rendered excellent service in putting the movement on a firm foundation. In the short space of time since 1911, when Mrs. Stewart organized her first moonlight school, the system has spread over seventeen states, and its enthusiastic supporters have rallied around the slogan to stamp out illiteracy in the United States by 1920. This is a beautiful example of the far-reaching effect of inspired leadership.

Moonlight schools

A minor movement of similar nature, but designed to serve a different class of rural people, originated in Cherokee County, Iowa, under the leadership of County Superintendent Katherine Ross, and has been styled "The Volunteer Continuation School Movement." It is but loosely connected with the existing public school system and consists, in reality, of private school organizations. These organizations are formed and supported by students above the age of fourteen years who are eager to continue their education beyond the scope of the district school but find it difficult or impossible to take a regular high school course in some neighboring city or village school. In Iowa these schools

Volunteer continuation schools

are called "township special schools," and by reason of their practical and vocational course of study, of their skillful and well-paid teachers, and of their system of individual instruction, they have attained great popularity and exerted a wholesome influence on rural community life.

Superintendent Ross deserves the gratitude of country people for pointing the way to a simple, modest method of providing something better than merely an eighth-grade education in any rural community; but the question immediately arises, Why should the rich farmers of Iowa resort to a subterfuge like township special schools when they are perfectly able to establish excellent consolidated rural high schools in every county of the state? If there are students beyond the age of fourteen years who cannot take a full high school course in such consolidated schools, special winter short courses may easily be arranged for their benefit and for such length of time as may suit their convenience during the winter months when there is a lull in the farm work. If all educational work were made a part of the public school system, no duplication of buildings, teaching force, and equipment would be necessary, and secondary as well as elementary education would become a public and not a private matter. Finally, every phase of school extension work not connected with the public school system weakens that system and robs both grades and high school classes of students, of financial backing, and of solid community support. In any event, extension work is less likely to succeed outside the public school system than within it.

Many of our states have foolishly tried to make the secondary education of farmer boys and girls an appendage to city and village high schools. The sooner we throw this notion into the discard and place within reach

of the farm home a true type of better rural schools around which farmers will rally with enthusiasm, the better for the future of America's farmers and her wonderful agricultural possibilities. When our educational leaders shall clearly perceive that the village and city high school problem is essentially different from the rural high school problem, and that the addition of an agricultural department to a city high school cannot and will not convert it into a rural high school, we shall materially hasten the solution of the rural school problem. Just as the city high school, if true to its mission, must in addition to a broad foundation in general culture furnish its students with the best possible training for the industrial, vocational, and professional life of the city, so must the rural high school supplement the general education of its students with distinct training for the life and work of the farm. In their industrial and vocational education the two systems will differ widely; but in their training for citizenship — including æsthetic, moral, social, and spiritual education — the work will be almost identical.

A common misconception about rural high schools

In this misconception of rural secondary training, the farmers have frequently been their own worst enemies. Not a few of the otherwise intelligent and progressive farmers have preferred to send their children to the city high school with its more diversified and presumably more cultural course of study, when they should have patronized and supported the local high school of their own district. Such action is equivalent to an admission that city life is superior to country life and that training for the former is more valuable than training for the latter. Nothing can be more silly than such an assumption if both farmer and city dweller have the right view of life. Neither should a farmer make the excuse that a country

district cannot support as good a high school as the city district. If he is at all willing to pay liberally for the education of his children, and will tax himself for school purposes as freely as his city cousin, he need not worry about having a first-class school within easy reach of his home. Under present agricultural conditions, the average American farmer has a better chance to make his life comfortable, financially independent, and morally clean than the average city man; and it is not the lack of money in the pocket or the strong box of the farmer that makes rural education so inferior to urban education. The average farmer needs to view the rural community in a larger perspective—as a place worthy of his highest respect and best endeavors, and not as a place inferior to the city.

**Expefience of urban high schools in giving training for rural life**

Every school must be in harmony with its environment, loyal to its patrons, and devoted to the highest good of the community. Any departure from this ideal is inimical to the best interest of the school; and any plan to subsidize it for the purpose of giving instruction in subjects which are of no vital concern to the people of the community itself, is futile and unwise. This has been the experience of many city and village high schools that have added so-called agricultural departments to their schools for the express purpose of training country boys and girls in them for the life upon the farm. No doubt the most extensive experiment of this kind ever undertaken by any state was tried out in Minnesota. In 1909 its legislature provided special state aid of $2500 annually to ten village high schools for the establishment of strong agricultural departments, offering not only a full four-year course in scientific agriculture to high school students but providing special agricultural short courses to older country boys and girls of the neighborhood who had either

graduated from the district school or had left it for other reasons. The hope and belief of the legislators and of most of the educational leaders was that these young people would flock to the new agricultural short courses, since instruction was entirely free to the pupils themselves or the home district. This initial act of 1909 was later supplemented by another law which granted liberal state aid to any high school of the state which would establish a good agricultural department and offer substantially the same kind of instruction and extension work as the original ten schools.

In the first burst of enthusiasm, the young people of the neighboring farms responded to the call of the new departments, and classes of ten to thirty short-course students were organized in upwards of a hundred village and city high schools. But in a few years the fond hopes of the most ardent advocates of these short courses were completely shattered. Today they have been abandoned in all but a handful of schools, and these are located in districts where peculiar local conditions favor the continuation of the work. This has been the net result of the much-heralded and eulogized boys' and girls' short courses in Minnesota high schools. The lesson should be plain to any intelligent student of the problem. Effective and lasting rural school extension work must be carried on in bona fide and not in pseudo rural schools. Short courses, moreover, should speedily be reduced to the minimum, everywhere. Rural people should be encouraged to have their children graduate from a four-year course of scientific agricultural training and not rely upon the milk-and-water diet of a short course; but where graduation from high school is not possible, the short course should be held in a rural high school and not in a city school with an urban atmosphere.

The question, then, naturally arises, Is there a place for an agricultural department in a city or village high school? Yes, there is, most decidedly. It has the same reason for existence that a foreign-language department or a science department has in such a school. There will always be found in such a school a certain number of pupils who desire to study agriculture for the sake of its bearing on all life, both rural and urban; and these pupils should have the privilege of studying agriculture for the purpose of gaining a clear insight into the most fundamental of human occupations.

Another important question that may as well be answered here is, Can a village school be made a rural school to all intents and purposes and should a consolidated school ever be placed in a village or town? Whenever the village or town in question is small and its interests are identical with the interests of the surrounding territory, a consolidated school may safely be located in it, provided there is harmony in the entire territory and the purpose is to build up a first-class consolidated school with a distinct rural atmosphere; but where the central village is large and the interests of its citizens differ considerably from that of the farming community surrounding it, the consolidated school should preferably be located in the open country. Dual-purpose schools, like dual-purpose cows, may be disappointing. A rural school must be located in a rural-minded community and must be administered by rural-minded people. Substitutes should not be accepted, unless local conditions leave no other choice.

Boys' and girls' club work

Nation-wide boys' and girls' club work has taken the country fairly by storm. The seed was sown by some local clubs organized nearly twenty years ago in Iowa, Illinois, Pennsylvania, and other states. In New York it became state wide as early as

1898, under the direction of Cornell University; but the movement did not become national in character until 1907. In the preceding year, 1906, Dr. Seaman A. Knapp was employed by the United States Government to start farm demonstration work for adult farmers in some of the Southern states; and the expenses of the undertaking were defrayed by the General Education Board of New York and the national government, jointly. Directly upon the heels of this movement, a modest corn-club association with a total of 162 boys between the ages of ten and eighteen years sprang up the following year in the state of Mississippi, under the leadership of Mr. W. H. Smith, who later became supervisor of rural schools. The achievement of this handful of boys set fire to the entire South, so that by 1912 over 100,000 boys were registered in the corn clubs of that section alone. In 1910, the girls' canning and garden clubs began in the same modest way as the corn clubs, having a total of 325 members in the states of Virginia and South Carolina during the first year; but the membership grew to 30,000 in two years and has never slackened its pace since.

Present status of club work

The South has but pointed out the way for others to follow, and all sorts of agricultural projects are now carried on in thousands of boys' and girls' clubs which dot the country from ocean to ocean. Under the leadership of Mr. O. H. Benson, the United States Department of Agriculture definitely undertook the task of federating the various clubs into one huge national organization; and in 1912 it formed the thirty-three Western and Northern states into a division similar to that of the fifteen Southern states already organized. This new division has increased its club membership from a total of 22,000 boys and girls in 1912 to more than 450,000 in 1918. In six years the work of

this department has grown so tremendously that Mr. Benson shares with no less than ten federal assistants the work of supervising this great industrial army of boys and girls. The additional state, county, district, and emergency club leaders appointed for the period of the war, all coöperating with Mr. Benson through the agricultural colleges and state departments of the several states, now number over 200 in the Northwestern Division alone. Just to supervise the work, the federal government set aside, during the fiscal year 1917, a regular appropriation of $115,000, and more than doubled the amount by a special appropriation of $235,000 to stimulate food production during the war. To these purely administrative expenses must be added vast sums in the form of prize money and appropriations made by states, state fair bodies, counties, and local associations, so that the few thousand dollars devoted to club work less than ten years ago have been increased to several millions annually. Nothing of a similar nature, ever undertaken by the children of any other country, can compare with this achievement of American boys and girls.

To describe the club work in detail would require a good-sized volume, and the succeeding explanation is but a fragment of the record. Nor must we, when quoting mere figures and money values, lose sight of the intangible but none the less real benefits to society. This intangible but larger purpose of the work has been admirably stated in the Indiana Report on supervised home projects for the year 1916, which says:[1]

Some of the results

"Things of greatest worth are not valued in terms of money. Therefore, when we say that during the year 1916, 21,532 pupils in Indiana produced through home

[1] Educational Bulletin No. 19, State Board of Education. Indianapolis, Indiana, January, 1917.

A Few of the Records of Champion Boys' and Girls' Club Workers for the Season of 1916, Northern and Western States

CORN CLUB

| State | Name and Address | Yield per Acre | Cost per Acre | Profit per Acre |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Minn. | Vern H. Johnson, Cokato | 123.96 bu. | $40.16 | $99.24 |
| Conn. | Evart Healey, North Woodstock | 112.0 | 44.60 | 127.75 |
| N. J. | Neil West, Robbinsville | 106.9 | 37.80 | 47.89 |
| Mich. | Floyd Bergey, Kent Co. | 104.25 | 32.57 | 85.95 |
| N. Dak. | Arthur Granlund, Ransom Co. | 103.33 | —— | —— |
| Ind. | Paul Fortmeyer, Ft. Wayne | 101.4 | 13.20 | 87.70 |
| N. M. | Robert Strickland, Roswell | 100.0 | 13.10 | 174.50 |

POTATO CLUB

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wash. | Tommie Day, Mt. Vernon | 612.0 | 74.40 | 603.84 |
| Utah | J. Max Marshall, Tocele | 532.0 | 69.00 | 500.25 |
| Idaho | Nellie Chase, Crofino | 480.0 | 68.00 | 593.92 |
| Idaho | Everett Bentel, Idaho Falls | 480.0 | 60.40 | 470.00 |
| Cal. | Ernest Carlson, Aroata | 463.0 | 72.00 | 770.80 |
| Minn. | Ruth Enstrom, Carlton | 441.36 | 53.60 | 492.80 |

HOME CANNING CLUB

| | | No. of Quarts Canned | Cost | Profit |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Wash. | William Earl, Washougal | 1590 | $85.81 | $391.12 |
| Ariz. | Erma Aurey, Phœnix | 537 | 57.65 | 101.54 |
| Mass. | Herminie Scholz, Roslindale | 334.5 | 134.40 | —— |

HOME GARDEN CLUB

| | | Cost of $\frac{1}{10}$ Acre | Profit from $\frac{1}{10}$ Acre |
|---|---|---|---|
| Kans. | Elsie Gordanier | $25.18 | $340.31 |
| S. Dak. | John B. Gilliland, Watertown | 12.00 | 252.00 |
| N. Dak. | Thelma Young | 50.24 | 221.92 |

projects $180,331.93 worth of products at a cost of $56,677.44, leaving a net profit of $123,654.49, we do not mean to cite this achievement as the most valuable result of the work. Such achievement requires the kind of exercise of mind and muscle that develops ability to plan and execute, that insures better farming and better home making in the near future, that prepares for leadership, that promotes coöperative endeavor, that brings a realization of individual responsibility to the home, the school, the community, that strengthens the determination to succeed in the face of most adverse circumstances, that gives sufficient insight into real life to insure genuine enjoyment in helpful service, that produces sterling qualities of character. Results such as these are invaluable and are not capable of measurement in terms of dollars and cents."

The significance of these records becomes more apparent when the average crop yields of the country at large are compared with the results obtained. Thus the average acre yield of corn for the United States in 1916 was 24.4 bushels, or twenty per cent of the amount raised by Vern H. Johnson of Minnesota; and the average potato yield was but 80.4 bushels, or thirteen per cent of that secured by Tommie Day of Washington. Furthermore, the 1916 records of the club workers were by no means the high-water mark of achievement reached by the boys and girls. Some of the yields have been so astounding that they read like tales in a story book. In the contest of 1912, for example, two Alabama boys, J. P. Deach of Union Grove and Willie Atchison of McCalla, raised 196.27 bushels and 197.25 bushels of corn respectively; Carlous Reddock of Summerland, Mississippi, raised 206.60 bushels; and Ernest Joyce of South Carolina raised a total of 207.16 bushels per acre. Even these

The "round-up." These Indiana boys are corn-club members who have won trips to Purdue University to attend the State Corn School and One Week Short Course. (*Photograph by Z. M. Smith, Lafayette, Indiana.*)

remarkable yields were eclipsed by the far-famed Jerry Moore of South Carolina, who harvested a total of 228 bushels from a single acre.

But the boys have had no monopoly in carrying off the honors of club work. The girls have shown the same zeal and enthusiasm and secured equally valuable results. In Etowah County, Alabama, little Ruth Anderson at the age of fourteen put up 700 cans of tomatoes and 750 cans of beans, all raised on one tenth of an acre of ground, and with the proceeds of her summer's work she furnished a large share of the money spent in remodeling the family home into an attractive bungalow. The girls of the same county have in four years put up 172,555 cans of fruits and vegetables, valued at $29,400; and every club girl in the county now plants a winter garden at the close of the summer season to insure the family a supply of fresh vegetables during the winter. Another successful canning enterprise is reported from Walton County, Florida. In a commercial venture calling for the delivery of 5000 jars of first-class figs, three club girls successfully canned and contributed 1000 jars each to this shipment. Hamilton County, Tennessee, is also proud of the record of its girls' clubs. During the season of 1916, 200 girls engaged in canning work and 280 were members of poultry clubs. Through the agency of the girls, hundreds of homes have become interested in the latest and best scientific methods of home management.

Those interested in further details of club work may obtain valuable data from the annual reports of state club leaders. The examples here cited have been duplicated or surpassed in many other states. Is not the success already attained worthy of our closest study and attention, and what may we reasonably expect of this movement in the future? Suppose

Future possibilities of club work

that the stimulus given to scientific agricultural production in the United States by boys' and girls' club work should increase our present annual production of more than fifteen billion dollars a year by just one per cent?[1] That would mean an addition of one hundred and fifty million dollars annually to our national wealth! Such a result is not only possible but quite probable, and it may be that an increase of even five to ten per cent is not an unreasonable expectation when the boys and girls now engaged in club work shall have grown to manhood and womanhood and are independent farmers themselves. Through scientific methods of farming like those pursued by the club workers, the soil fertility on the average farm may easily be doubled, and this will naturally increase the total production still more.

Furthermore, what is to hinder us from giving this sort of agricultural training to every country boy and girl in the near future instead of the mere handful now engaged in club work? Nothing whatever, when the country schools have been reorganized and readjusted. Indeed, the logical and reasonable outcome of the new rural education which the consolidated school will furnish, must inevitably be a large increase in crop production and soil fertility. Our boys' and girls' clubs have made an excellent beginning in it, with school facilities as they are; yet few people can now fully grasp the possibilities that are wrapped up in the better training of our coming rural schools.

[1] See the 1916 Report of the Secretary of Agriculture, page 695. The value of all farm products for 1916 was placed at $13,448,310,509, and for 1917 it easily exceeded the $15,000,000,000 mark.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### The Rural Community and Its Needs

SOME one has said that "the community is defined by the team haul";[1] but neither a political nor a geographical subdivision of county or state is a community. Not even the inhabitants of a township, village, trading district, etc., when taken collectively, form a true community. It is only when such people act together as a unit for common purposes and when they have acquired the habit of thus working together for common ends that the term "community" fitly expresses this relationship. The name is also loosely applied by some people to churches, schools, clubs, and the like. They are not communities but institutions, devices, and means to an end — frameworks, or community centers, around which real communities may be built. In the final analysis a community means the federation of all the forces and resources of a convenient territory to carry out a common program of work for the benefit of all. Of suitable community framework there is no lack in the country districts of the United States, but of real communities there is still a great dearth. The rural districts need community builders.

What is a community?

The sovereigns of a democracy are its people — not a privileged governing class of them, but all the people. In order to govern themselves well, they must be educated to the highest point of efficiency which their resources will permit; but while we freely grant this in theory, in practice we fall far short of this ideal. The besetting sin of a democracy is that the people fail to be in earnest, to be persistent, to think things

Educating the community

[1] Warren H. Wilson, *The Evolution of the Country Community*, Chapter XII.

through for themselves. As a people we depend upon others to do our thinking for us. Pupils think in terms of their teachers; the individual follows his party leader; the laborer accepts the tenets of the professional agitator; and so on, ad infinitum. The only cure for this evil is thorough, comprehensive, and universal training for all. Life has become so complex and so exacting in its demands that formal study of some kind should be kept up throughout by young and old.

With children the formal training naturally centers in the school, but even with them a large share of their education is the product of experiences outside the schoolroom. With adults the case is different. They must seek additional training in their usual vocations, in community service, and in school extension work. Their education is completed in the school of life, in which everybody should matriculate. When old and young have settled down to a systematic, progressive plan of life for all, we may term it "the community at school." It is the ideal way of rounding out a people's education and is essential to make a democracy efficient. Such a program should primarily concern itself with our life work, our duty to country and our duty to God. For a farmer it means agriculture in all its relationships — physical, moral, æsthetic, and spiritual.

> Be it ever so humble,
> There's no place like home.

Living on the land

In its significance here, as the abiding place of man's domestic affections, the home is the nation's greatest material asset. A spot conducive to a happy, peaceful family life and suitable as a permanent abode of contented people may become a real home; none other can. Upon the character and permanency of the home and

the purity of the family life within, rest the strength and stability of the state. Clean homes, rooted to the soil, are of infinitely greater value than battlements and forts, armies and navies. One of the principal duties of a powerful agricultural nation like ours should be the establishment of permanent rural homes for the greatest possible number of its citizens. To this end both our laws and a clear-cut national policy should protect us against land monopoly by individuals or corporations and should conserve the soil for actual home builders of the highest type. That land speculation, monopoly, and unreasonable farm values tend to supplant resident freeholders by a class of nomadic tenants has already been pointed out in Chapter II. Let those who think but lightly of these evils or who regard the question of land ownership as of no special significance, cast just one look at the unhappy, turbulent mob of Russia's landless, ignorant peasants and then at its opulent landed aristocracy and the most thoughtless observer will at once have to concede that "the land problem" of a country is a question of the first magnitude.

The larger life

If certain localities have been disappointed and surprised at the superficial patriotism displayed by some of their citizens, must they not feel that they have simply been reaping what they have so carelessly sown? Can a people be primarily occupied with the thought of "raising more hogs, to get more money, to buy more land, to raise more corn, to feed more hogs, etc.," and in the monotonous round of duties from starlight to starlight for the purpose of material gain neglect the nobler aims of life, without impairing the ideals of citizenship? If the mind is chiefly occupied with larger crop production, mortgage lifting, acquisition of more land, and other materialistic aims, and if the whole family is continually reminded of cheerless, back-breaking, and un-

remitting toil, country life becomes but a mockery and a hollow existence in spite of financial prosperity.

Where human rights receive scant attention and huge, expensive barns tower beside dingy homes devoid of every comfort and convenience, — mere places to eat and sleep, — there is something wrong with the owners. When farmsteads are simply conglomerations of unsightly buildings, without a trace of beauty, plan, or proportion, it is a mute testimony to the barren minds and hearts of the farmers. If childhood is robbed of its priceless joy of play and recreation, and boys and girls are needlessly taken out of school to perform the manual labor of an adult the very moment they are beyond the reach of the state's compulsory education laws, those who commit this crime scarcely deserve the sacred name of father or mother. Human burden bearers may, under the conditions described, rear a generation of honest, dull, and plodding toilers; but family life worthy of a great liberty-loving and inspired people cannot thrive in such an atmosphere. Learning how to live is a pressing problem in many a rural community today. Its solution depends upon a clear understanding of the following important factors and many minor ones: (1) better homes and household conveniences, (2) beautifying the countryside, (3) opportunities for wholesome play and recreation, (4) a new spiritual vision, (5) better sanitation and health, and (6) community coöperation. The whole problem may be expressed in one comprehensive term — community building.

The notion that the farm home must forego the comforts and conveniences of a city home is fast being dispelled.

**The farmhouse**

A few country dwellings may now be found in every progressive neighborhood, where the people enjoy nearly all the facilities of an up-to-date city residence. Basements are fitted up with furnaces, fuel

rooms, electric light plants, laundry rooms, vegetable cellars, etc. An inexpensive septic tank connected with a drain tile makes indoor toilets possible. A neighboring spring, a force pump, or a windmill with supply tank delivers an abundance of good water to any part of the house or farmstead. The home is not only well lighted but properly ventilated, and screened porches keep out the pestiferous flies and offer a cool retreat on hot summer days. In addition to the kitchen, dining room, sitting room, bathroom, and bedrooms, the house frequently contains a playroom for the children, an office for the farmer, and a sewing room for the wife and daughters. All of these are tastefully furnished and decorated, and the entire home has an atmosphere of comfort and of intelligent management.

Above all, the kitchen is now receiving deserved attention in order to lighten the burdens of the housewife. It has beyond question been the most neglected factor in the country home and has, in the past, caused much needless suffering, discontent, and hardship for the women folks. A small engine or motor to run a cream separator, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, or other household appliances costs but little in comparison with the load which it takes from the housewife's shoulders, and there is as much justification for this improvement as there is for machinery used in pumping, plowing, feed grinding, grain elevating, etc.

With these improvements and in such an environment farm life loses much of its former drudgery; and leisure for reading, music, and the cultivation of æsthetic tastes dispels the ignorance and monotony of former days. Among the recent conveniences and civilizing factors of rural life should also be mentioned the telephone, automobile, and good roads.

With physical aids like these just enumerated, and with educational and spiritual needs wisely supplied, rural life may speedily be revolutionized. It is equally certain, however, that unless better conditions become more general in the country than they now are, the best farmers will continue to move to the city and the drain on rural social life will not be abated.

Beautifying the countryside

Systematic, concerted effort to beautify the farm homes and the country community is still the exception in vast sections of rural America, and this failure is not only regrettable but hardly short of criminal. Hard-headed, callous men have laid out farmsteads without thought of order, beauty, plan, or purpose. Paint is applied to buildings for the sole purpose of preserving the wood. Barns, surrounded by unsightly straw and manure piles, are huddled close to the farmhouse in reckless defiance of sanitation or decency of appearance. Yards, covered with weeds and littered with machinery, serve as feeding grounds for pigs, calves, and chickens. Fences, bridges, groves, and outbuildings bear the stamp of economic purposes only. Church and school lots are looked upon as parcels of ground on which to erect cheap buildings where public servants at low salaries may be stationed to minister to the educational and spiritual welfare of the neighborhood; and even some cemeteries have the appearance of mere burying places for dead bodies! The picture is not overdrawn, but is a sad reality in too many rural districts. Some people attempt to justify these conditions by pleading poverty or the lack of time for anything but the most essential farm labor, but the plea is specious, to say the least.

Granting that a farmer's first consideration is rigid economy, are the conditions just enumerated the natural corollary of this economy? Does it cost him any money

A modern farm home

to plan his farmstead for both service and beauty? Is it cheaper to build a barn in close proximity to the house than to build it at a safe and reasonable distance? Why not have a pleasing color scheme for the farm buildings, instead of a single dull color applied to all of them? Does the question of expense enter seriously into the trimming of fence posts, groves, orchards, and lanes? Has the saving of time or money anything to do with piling straw or manure close to the home instead of providing a proper place for them back of the barns and sheds? Are there not in the life of the busiest farmer a few spare moments each day or week to care for a flower bed, run a lawn mower, plant some ornamental shrubs, and cultivate a garden and a small orchard? The experience of hundreds of families who under the most adverse circumstances and financial stress have converted neglected and dilapidated farmsteads into attractive and prosperous homes is ample proof that whole communities could do likewise if the farmers had but the right vision and knew the intrinsic value of a beautiful environment. We need a country-wide campaign for beautifying the rural communities, demanding the active support of every rural organization. The grand opportunity of the consolidated school for this service has been explained in Chapter V.

Play and recreation

In the childhood days of our grandparents, rural communities looked forward to their husking bees, barn raisings, log rollings, spelling bees, singing schools, and "literaries" as annual or seasonal events of great importance. They satisfied the social instincts and furnished a pleasing variety of neighborhood amusement and recreation; but in the highly individualistic rural life of the twentieth century, this wholesome influence of the better class of rural play and recreation has almost entirely disappeared. What has survived in

the form of the country dance, baseball game, horse racing, and the like is sadly contaminated and brought into disrepute by a certain rough element given to profanity, carousing, or gambling. For the more respectable country folks, therefore, who avoid gatherings of this kind, rural sport has almost ceased to exist. Yet thoughtful people are convinced that if the farming community is to retain its young men and women, organized play and recreation must be restored and its influence extended far beyond its former scope.

In common with most animals, the young of the human species play as readily as they eat and drink. The surest way to make an animal vicious is to shut it up while young and suppress its instinct for play. Similarly, personal vice, stupidity, abnormal development, and social maladjustment result if children's play is curtailed or neglected. The assumption that work or "chores" can be substituted for play without injury to a child's life or character is as false and dangerous as it is common in thousands of rural communities.

**Special need of play and recreation in rural districts**

Because of its isolation, individualism, and independence, country life has greater need of organized play and recreation than city life. Proof of the old saying that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" is so abundant that one wonders why the most short-sighted parent cannot learn the simple lesson. The magnificent parks and playgrounds, free public baths, extensive recreation centers, and numerous clubs and athletic associations in the cities all testify to the fact that we are beginning to understand the importance of organized play and recreation. It is also significant that industrial corporations and employers of large numbers of men and women are annually spending enormous sums for wholesome amuse-

ment, recreation, and improvement of the leisure hours of their employees. Such movements are usually not prompted by a spirit of generosity or charity on the part of the employer, but rest upon the broad fundamental principle that industrial or mental efficiency and a rational standard of living demand a reasonable expenditure of time and money on play and recreation for young and old. Failure to provide this in the case of children or youth is almost fatal to normal development and good citizenship.

Admitting that the principle applies to people everywhere, it will not be hard to understand that certain obstacles existing in the country make it difficult of application in rural districts. People do not gather in large crowds unless called together for specific purposes, and unless good leaders are at hand in such meetings, no play or organized amusements will result even then. School districts have, until lately, been too small to get enough children of corresponding ages together for interesting games and sports; and unless real community centers exist where the whole neighborhood is accustomed to assemble, intimate acquaintance is lacking to draw out the play spirit and overcome the natural reserve of rural folks.

The question is, therefore, What shall the program be and how shall it be carried out? In the first place, it must be comprehensive and include the entire community — old and young, rich and poor, landlord and laborer, men and women, boys and girls. In the second place, it must be organized community effort. There must be competent leadership and enthusiasm of numbers; it must be seasonal and fit local conditions; and there must be spontaneity and variety.

Fortunately the countryside is not barren of natural facilities for organized play. It has an abundance of pleasant groves, natural scenery, and suitable grounds for

outdoor exercise. There is small need of parks, because extensive playgrounds for the entire community can easily be laid out on the consolidated school grounds or about the rural church or other center. There are no low-grade picture shows and theaters, poolrooms, or other questionable public places to pervert the taste for wholesome sports and pastimes; and the danger of commercializing sports and amusements is more remote in the country than in the city. The consolidated school with its ideal central location and ample playgrounds has a golden opportunity for the regeneration of rural play and recreation; and whether they are natural-born or trained leaders in this field, the principal of the school and his teachers should improve every opportunity for organizing the whole community to this end. If the rural pastor, Sunday School teachers, county Y. M. C. A. workers, grange and farmers' club leaders, will join hands with the teachers in this worthy endeavor, success is sure to crown their efforts.

**Rural facilities or amusements**

Some of the most worth-while and suitable country amusements are the following: (1) the common folk and children's games at school, led and supervised by the teachers; (2) baseball, basket ball, volley ball, track work, and similar games of skill and competition for the young folks; (3) play festivals, pageants, picnics, harvest home, community singing, band and orchestra practices, debating and literary societies.

Some will naturally ask, When and how shall people find time for such a program of amusements? Shall Sunday be given over to this purpose? No, it would be most unfortunate if the farmer's spiritual life were robbed of its quiet religious practices and Sabbath desecration became rampant on the plea that there is no time for play on week days. If stores, factories,

**Time for recreation**

public offices, and other places of business can close their respective places of business for a half holiday on Saturday afternoon, would it be an unheard-of crime to suspend work on the farm also? Suppose that two or three hours on Saturday afternoon, or any other convenient day of the week agreeable to the majority, were set aside for community recreation and all joined in the custom? Could it not be done without detriment to workers and employers, except during the busiest seasons, perhaps? I know that the unthinking will at once condemn the suggestion as revolutionary and alarming and may denounce it as a reckless waste of time and energy; but would it be? May not the thought of such a pleasant time which is awaiting young and old each week so stimulate the workers that they will actually accomplish as much and do even better work in the remaining days and hours of the week? This is no idle dream; the plan has been tested out in certain progressive and intelligent communities with this very surprising and happy result. Indeed, the time may not be far distant when all rural communities will take this high moral ground and position and will place happiness and contentment above ceaseless toil, money making, and dreary, monotonous living.

It may also come to pass that the length of the rural working day will be reduced by reason of still more efficient labor-saving machinery and that a few hours may be devoted to play and recreation during the long evenings of spring and summer. That during the lull of farm work in the winter season there is plenty of time for literary programs, community singing, debates, plays, and the like, no one will deny. It needs but the central school, a community building, neighborhood church, or other social center to accommodate the crowd, and all these blessings may be enjoyed. Verily, there are impending changes in

the social life of a community of which people little dreamed a few years ago. Speed the day when they shall be general the country over!

"The country church is married to the community; that which affects the one affects the other also. If the community is impoverished the church wears a pinched appearance. If the community is prosperous, the church under normal conditions shows growth and self-respect." [1] While this is true in general, the status of the rural church today in a great many communities is even more grave than the quotation indicates. The swift economic changes in the country have not alone left the rural church decadent, but have almost eliminated it in some of the most fertile agricultural sections. More than 1700 country churches have in late years been closed in the rich state of Illinois alone, and in hundreds of other churches there is but an occasional service and a marked decline in church membership. Similar conditions prevail in other wealthy agricultural states, and a recent survey of Lane County, Oregon, revealed that after fifty-four years of church organization in the county only 13.1 per cent of the country people were church members, while 86.9 per cent claimed no church affiliation whatever! Clearly there is something out of joint in the religious life of a farming community where such conditions prevail, and there must be a regeneration of the church or the country will lose its Christian character.

**The community and the church**

The decline of the country church and the problem of reorganization now confronting it are caused by the same economic and social changes that affected the rural school, as outlined in Chapter II. The Pioneer was at first satisfied with an occasional visit from the primitive, itinerant minister; and even later,

**External causes of the decline**

[1] Warren H. Wilson, *The Church in the Open Country.*

preaching services were usually conducted in the settlers' homes and but few country churches erected. During the period of the Land Farmer the case was different. These ardent church supporters, but independent spirits and fiery sectarian rivals, multiplied congregations and dotted the country with churches, many of which were too weak from the beginning to become financially independent and flourishing. Then, when the Land Speculator arrived on the scene and raised havoc with existing social and economic conditions, the congregations were disrupted and the few "former pillars of the church" who remained were gradually forced to give up the fight to support the declining churches. One after another they closed their doors or the congregations had to be satisfied with an occasional preaching service conducted by the minister from a neighboring village. The problem has become still more acute in communities where a mixed population of foreign birth, not yet Americanized, succeeded the land farmers or where a tenant body with exceptionally low standards of life has displaced the owners. The community spirit will have to be greatly strengthened before the people will unite in generous and harmonious support of a neighborhood church.

Causes within the church

The decline of the country church is partly due to internal causes, and its ministers and administrators must shoulder some of the blame. The type of clergyman who dealt with the intensively individualistic settler of the preceding generation had to appeal to the emotions of his hearers and exalt creed and sectarian doctrine. With them, periodic revivals accompanied by waves of excitement, to be followed by periods of backsliding and more revivals, were the rule; and a strong personal gospel calculated to stir the emotions of the individual was the preacher's only avenue of approach

to gain converts and build up congregations. Such a gospel has lost its drawing power with the modern farmer. Through economic pressure he has been forced to resort to scientific farming and seek safety in social and financial organization. In other words, he must become a community builder and must learn the lesson of coöperation or give up the struggle. People in such a frame of mind demand a socialized church whose minister must understand and practice community coöperation and be an intelligent judge and guide in temporal as well as spiritual affairs. If aged and worn-out ministers are, under these conditions, sent into the rural districts to preach in their declining years, failure is the logical result. No matter how earnest such men may be, they cannot grasp the spirit of the new community and it is self-evident that they cannot infuse new life into a dying church.

The call for a new country church and a new type of minister is just as insistent as the call for a new kind of school and a new type of teacher. It cannot be ignored. The appeal is for young men of energy and ability, specially fitted for their peculiar task. College training, refinement, and broad culture are just as essential in the rural field as in the city field; but in addition the country ministers must be students of rural economics, good organizers, and, above all, they must be in sympathy with rural life. They must be ready to do teamwork with the country teachers, county Y. M. C. A. workers, and other rural organizers to bring about harmonious coöperation and a proper social and educational as well as religious atmosphere. Even then their efforts may not be crowned with success unless they are able to federate the various religious forces and to prevail upon the people to tolerate no more churches than the community can support without burdening itself.

The modern rural minister

Church union of the various denominations may yet be a long way off in the centers of population, but, unless practical federation of religious forces can be effected in rural districts, the country church is destined to sink lower still in the estimation of the people. It is not for the layman to say just how the country church is to be regenerated. That task must fall upon the wisest and best of its own leaders. It seems, however, to an interested and impartial observer that the time has come when sectarian rivalry between the country churches must be reduced to the minimum or the influence of the church will approach the vanishing point. But Christianity is too vital to mankind to waste its strength in dogma, creed, sectarianism, and denominationalism; and it is too broad and deep and holy to be sacrificed in any community. No greater calamity could befall the country districts than to lose their churches and their Christian character because of denominational strife or for lack of insight into a new condition. A churchless, Godless rural community is as barren as a desert, no matter what its material prosperity may be.

A glimpse of the new rural church

At Brooklyn Center in Hennepin County, Minnesota, there was dedicated in January, 1917, a country church worthy of its mission and reflecting credit upon the people for miles around. It is an edifice costing $20,000, located in the open country, and its beautiful environment and well-kept grounds, on which is located a new five-thousand-dollar parsonage, rival those of many prosperous city churches. The building itself is of the so-called institutional type. Its commodious auditorium seats 350 people in perfect comfort and by crowding will accommodate a great many more. It has a separate Sunday School room with numerous classrooms for the various departments, a pastor's

study, and a basement fully equipped for community service.

Although the church affiliates with the Methodist Episcopal denomination, it is to all intents and purposes a true community church. It has enjoyed the loyal support of the entire community without regard to sectarian lines and was clear of debt on dedication day. The Rev. Mr. Walker, the efficient pastor of the church, is an enthusiastic disciple of the big country life movement and a warm advocate of the country community. From 125 to 175 people attend church services on Sunday mornings, and a hundred or more return for the evening meeting. On special occasions the congregation has numbered as high as 470 people. A complete Sunday School has an enrollment of 140. The following auxiliary organizations hold regular weekly meetings and are in a flourishing condition: Ladies' Aid Society, Junior League, Young People's Club, and Prayer Meeting. In addition to these there is a wide-awake Farmers' Club — a true Get-together Club — which holds its meetings at the church. It supports a full course of lectures and entertainments and in its regular meetings has local literary programs in connection with the discussion of farm problems. The attendance at the club meetings runs as high as 150.

Great stress is laid upon social service, and the community program provides suitable meetings for young and old. There is an abundance of games, plenty of good music, and outdoor sports in season. Add to this sort of rural church a modern rural school to educate the boys and girls, and all fear of an exodus to the city will disappear.

A similar church near Plainfield, Du Page County, Illinois, has gained national prominence through the remarkable work of its pastor, the Rev. Matthew B. McNutt. When this young man began his labors in the community,

fresh from college and without experience in the rural field, he found a congregation more dead than alive in religious matters, but in ten years of untiring ministry he transformed the whole community. The old dilapidated meeting house was replaced by a modern community church which has become the center of rural life in the neighborhood. In competition with the neighboring town attractions, — the grange, social clubs of different kinds, and other organizations, — it has more than held its own as the real mainspring of the community life. Former dissension and division have disappeared; the country is prosperous and happy; and the most kindly spirit pervades the neighborhood.

At Quaker Hill in New York is another example of a community church which has united a Christian neighborhood of many denominations into one brotherhood, worshiping God at a common shrine, as sincere and intelligent brethren ought to do.

In places like these the leaven of the modern spirit of Christian rural people is evolving a better and nobler Christian rural life that must some day pervade the farming communities of America if we shall become truly worthy of that God-given freedom of which we talk a great deal but which we are living imperfectly in city or country.

The essence of public health work is to do two important things by means of modern scientific methods — promote the health of individuals and prevent disease; but until recent years we could hardly lay claim to real, effective health work. With the exception of some progressive cities, we have actually been living in a state of diluted barbarism so far as public sanitation and hygiene are concerned, and the majority of the rural communities have not yet emerged from that state.

Rural health work

People have for generations regarded the ravages of

common diseases like tuberculosis, measles, scarlet fever, typhoid, hookworm, diphtheria, and the like, as necessary evils that must be borne and cannot be avoided or controlled. Indeed, some parents go so far in their ignorance of the laws of health that they will deliberately expose their children to communicable diseases like measles, mumps, and whooping cough — commonly called the ills of childhood — in order that they may "catch" the diseases when young! The practice often brings needless suffering upon innocent children who might otherwise pass through life unscathed by these foes of mankind.

Even our forefathers learned that by concerted action the country could be cleared of bears, wolves, foxes, panthers, and other vermin that destroyed and ravaged their flocks. These nuisances were large enough to be readily seen, and men organized neighborhood hunts and drives to exterminate the pests; but, strange to say, in our enlightened age, people still fail to grasp the idea that effective warfare may be waged against flies and mosquitoes, or against the germs of tuberculosis, typhoid, pneumonia, and other diseases, whose ravages are a thousand times more dangerous and deadly than those of all the wild beasts of the forest combined.

The truth about diseases has been further obscured by an older public health theory which sought the sources of disease in man's environment and fulminated against crowded hovels, garbage cans, damp cellars, dirty clothes, defective plumbing, stagnant pools, dust, smoke, and the bodies of dead animals as breeders of disease. The public reasoned, therefore, that the city slums with their crowds and filth were the logical home and source of human diseases and that the clean homes of the well-to-do city dwellers were practically immune from serious epidemics because of the environment. By the same token, it was

asserted that people on the farm had less to fear from communicable diseases because of the abundance of fresh air, out-of-door life, freedom from smoke, and scattered population, and that the country was a much more healthful place in which to live than the city.

Thanks to the modern health expert, bacteriologist, and physician, the older theories of public health work have now been largely exploded and facts have taken the place of fiction. Modern sanitation concentrates its efforts for the eradication of infectious diseases on the following all-important points: (1) the infected individual, (2) the transmission of diseases from persons known to be infected, and (3) the ordinary routes or methods by which such diseases are transmitted. In this program, the general environment of people also has its part, but it is of secondary importance instead of primary. Thus garbage cans, damp cellars, dirt, dust, and foul air are only possible carriers of disease germs that must come from an infected individual. Naturally, then, the first step is to discover the individual who is affected and prevent the dissemination of the disease from that primary source. Thus if in the case of tuberculosis, which is by far "the greatest single man killer in the world," as some one has said, we could locate the seriously infected persons and prevent the transmission of the disease to other non-infected persons, this insidious foe would soon be eliminated entirely.

**The new public health**

It is now a well-established fact, according to good medical authority, that most germs like those which cause tuberculosis, typhoid, and other diseases multiply and thrive best in the body of the host and rarely outside of it. When once discharged from that host, they soon die or remain dangerous for a brief time only. This is a fundamentally important factor in disease control. Of like

importance also is the fact that the usual and most direct routes by which the germs are transmitted to well persons are food, flies, water, and milk supplies. When the two principal factors — infected individuals and the common routes of infection — can be fully controlled, and not until then, may we hope to rid mankind of these terrible enemies.

Bearing in mind these important facts, it is easy to see why modern methods of preventing the spread of diseases have done so much to alleviate human suffering and reduce the number of victims. Evidently, if infected persons can be prevented from contaminating the food and water supply, and if flies can be kept from the infected excretions and thus prevented from carrying the germs to the food supply of healthy persons or directly to non-infected individuals, the danger of spreading the disease is almost eliminated. The fly menace may therefore be greatly reduced if human excretions from infected individuals can be so screened from the flies as to prevent contact or transmission. It becomes self-evident further that dirt, garbage, air, stagnant water, and other supposed sources of disease are harmless, *per se*, if infection from some human source is kept from them. Moreover, they will not long remain dangerous when infected unless they are repeatedly contaminated.

Exact scientific knowledge of diseases, obtained by careful and tireless research, has paved the way for modern methods in public health. The larger cities, with their well-organized health departments, have not been slow in adopting at least some of the new and effective methods of health control. Food inspection at the central markets, protection of the city water supply against contamination at the source, inspection of dairies and the workmen employed in them, are relatively easy tasks as compared with the supervision of hundreds and thou-

Comparison of urban and rural health conditions

sands of sources of food and water supply in the country. Therefore, professional health work in the cities has so far outstripped professional health work in the country that in spite of slums and congested population, human diseases in the aggregate find more victims in the country than in the city. Health surveys made in recent years show unmistakably that the percentage of rural children suffering from bodily ills is twice or three times as large as the percentage of city children. Professor Woofter in a late work quotes the following statistics concerning this question: [1]

FIGURES COMPILED FROM HEALTH EXAMINATIONS OF CHILDREN IN TWENTY-FIVE AMERICAN CITIES AND OF RURAL SCHOOL CHILDREN IN FIVE AMERICAN STATES

| HEALTH DEFECTS IN CHILDREN EXAMINED | RURAL CHILDREN PER CENT | CITY CHILDREN PER CENT |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Defective teeth | 49.9 | 16.4 |
| 2. Enlarged tonsils | 30.0 | 8.8 |
| 3. Adenoids | 21.5 | 8.5 |
| 4. Eye defects | 21.0 | 5.1 |
| 5. Head lice | 11.1 | 18.6 |
| 6. Enlarged glands | 6.4 | 2.7 |
| 7. Ear defects | 4.8 | 1.0 |
| 8. Spinal curvatures | 3.5 | 1.8 |
| 9. Malnutrition | 2.0 | 1.8 |
| 10. Anæmia | 1.7 | 1.5 |
| 11. Skin diseases | 1.1 | 1.9 |
| 12. Mental defects | 0.8 | 0.2 |
| 13. Heart defects | 0.8 | 0.3 |

That the physique of young men from the country is also below that of young men from the city is the testimony of Dr. L. J. Cooke, gymnasium director of the University of Minnesota, who drew his conclusions from painstaking investigation of the physical conditions of both classes of men when entering the university. Mr. Cooke's own statement is: "In the boys from the farm the muscles of the arms and shoulders are usually well developed, while

[1] Thomas Woofter, *Teaching in the Rural Schools.*

nearly every other part of the physical organism falls below the general average. The city youth, who usually has had more or less physical training, possesses a much better physique."

These are serious but indisputable indictments of rural health conditions, and it is time that the country should awake to the gravity of the situation. Shall we shrink from doing our duty by country children and the country home in the matter of public health simply because it is expensive to carry out a complete and effective nation-wide health program? If Dr. Hoag is correct in saying that "the mortality in the United States from measles, scarlet fever, whooping cough, and diphtheria amounts every year to more than twice the loss of life on the field of Gettysburg," [1] why should we hesitate long to pay the comparatively small price of vanquishing these enemies instead of making the country mother the sole health department to fight the foes single-handed or with a few traditional household remedies?

**Remedies**

Hundreds of cities have found it to be a good investment to appoint capable physicians as health supervisors in their public schools, either on full time or part time duty, and to employ school nurses to follow up the work of the physicians. The need of employing such medical inspectors and school nurses in the rural schools is even greater than in the city schools, and the country must not make the flimsy objection that their schools are too small and scattered for health supervision. Surely the plea loses its force when applied to consolidated schools, because they can be reached easily and little time needs to be lost in traveling from one school to another in a regular circuit of a county or district. There should be a permanent nurse for the rural schools in every county.

[1] Hoag and Terman, *Health Work in the Schools.*

## RURAL LIFE ORGANIZATIONS

The great Trinity of Rural Life are the country home, the country church, and the country school. They originated and developed in the order named, and their intimate relationship, interdependence, and necessary readjustments have been treated at some length in the preceding chapter. Supplementing these, there are various other agencies and minor rural organizations which deserve some attention from every one interested in country life and the country community and without which a discussion of rural education in a broad sense would be incomplete. They may be classified as follows, according to their principal aims and purposes:

Home, church, and school

1. Young People's Organizations
2. Economic, Social, and Educational Organizations
3. Agricultural Improvement Associations
4. Political Organizations
5. Farm Women's Organizations

Further examination reveals that some of these are state wide and national in character, while others are principally local. Still others deal with so many phases of life that it is difficult to assign them to any one of these classes. All have the same general aim, however, that of making better men and women out of the country people and of creating a better country life.

The demand for organization

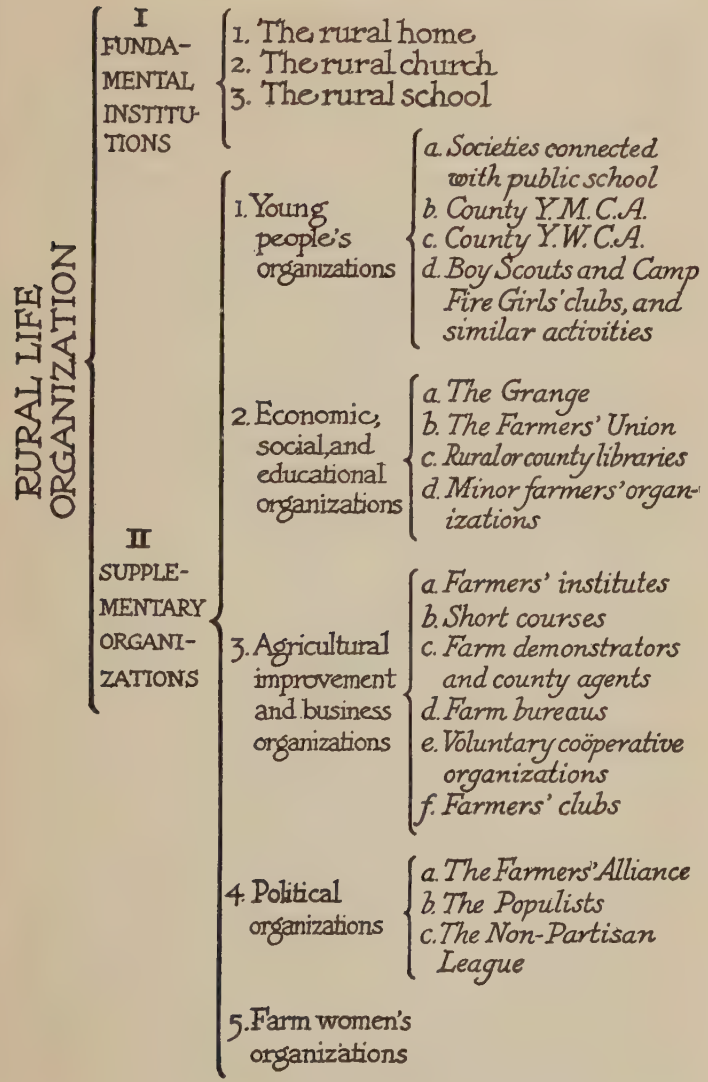
While we had an abundance of cheap, fertile farm lands and settlers could abandon worn-out farms for new and virgin soil, the old style of agriculture and non-scientific farming could flourish; but only the best and easily tilled land is suitable for this kind of farming. With the supply of first-class land gone, exploitation was doomed; soil fertility had to be restored to worn-out farms; and second and third rate lands, which

were formerly passed by, had to be brought under cultivation in competition with more favored agricultural lands. Organization, therefore, became highly desirable for all farmers in order to study and practice scientific farming more effectively; and for the small farmer it became an absolute necessity to unite with his neighbors for better buying and selling facilities in competition with the large farmer, or to lose out in the struggle for a bare living. If it be true, then, as stated at the beginning of this chapter, that the great rural problem is to establish permanent rural homes for the greatest possible number of intelligent country people, the small farmer must be protected, or must protect himself, through coöperation with his fellows. This means that rural coöperative enterprises have come to stay.

Young people's organizations

The best-known young folks' organizations in rural communities are the literary, musical, and recreational societies usually connected with the public schools. Most of them we have already noted and discussed. Others, like the county Y. M. C. A. and the county Y. W. C. A., are less common but are rapidly spreading in the country districts in a number of states. They are doing excellent teamwork with country pastors and country teachers to establish clean living, clean sports, and clean morals and to build up a refined Christian manhood and womanhood. For the younger children some adaptations of the Boy Scouts and the Girls' Camp Fire movements are sowing the seed of clean and purposeful living.

Of all the social-educational farmers' organizations, the Grange, or Patrons of Husbandry as it is officially called, easily takes first rank. It was conceived and organized in December, 1867, by a Minnesota farmer named O. H. Kelly. In 1866 Mr. Kelly was sent to the Southern states


RURAL LIFE ORGANIZATION
I
FUNDAMENTAL INSTITUTIONS
1. The rural home
2. The rural church
3. The rural school
II
SUPPLEMENTARY ORGANIZATIONS
1. Young people's organizations
a. Societies connected with public school
b. County Y.M.C.A.
c. County Y.W.C.A.
d. Boy Scouts and Camp Fire Girls' clubs, and similar activities
2. Economic, social, and educational organizations
a. The Grange
b. The Farmers' Union
c. Rural or county libraries
d. Minor farmers' organizations
3. Agricultural improvement and business organizations
a. Farmers' institutes
b. Short courses
c. Farm demonstrators and county agents
d. Farm bureaus
e. Voluntary coöperative organizations
f. Farmers' clubs
4. Political organizations
a. The Farmers' Alliance
b. The Populists
c. The Non-Partisan League
5. Farm women's organizations

as an agent of the United States government to investigate the agricultural conditions after the Civil War and to suggest means for improvement. This mission and the deplorable conditions he encountered in the South gave him a vision for the organization of farmers all over the nation for the following purposes: to suppress selfishness, to heal the wounds of the recent conflict, to spread the gospel of scientific farming and coöperative endeavor, and to foster the educational, moral, and social advancement of its members. Men, women, and children above the age of fourteen years, who are connected with agriculture, and also rural pastors and rural teachers, may become members.

**Social and educational organizations — The Grange**

The growth of the order was phenomenal, and by 1875 its early success was at the zenith with 21,697 subordinate granges and nearly a million members. Soon after that date, and especially during the decade from 1880 to 1890, the Grange suffered a sharp decline, caused largely by designing people who injected wild schemes of financial combines, market domination, politics, and other undesirable features into its program. The organization has since purged itself of this element and its doctrines and is today a mighty and growing power in all parts of the country, but its particular stronghold is in the New England and Middle Atlantic states. Among other national services rendered should be mentioned the untiring efforts of the order to bring about the enactment of such federal legislation as the following: the Interstate Commerce Act, establishment of the Department of Agriculture, the Oleomargarine Law, Parcels Post, and other important acts. The sum total of its influence on American husbandry is incalculable. Those who desire further information concerning the Grange are referred to Carney's *Country Life and the Country School.*

In the Southern states the Grange has found a worthy rival in the Farmers' Union, which claims a membership of over three millions and is, in point of numbers, the biggest farmers' organization in the country. Its principal aims are to promote scientific agriculture and improve the economic condition of its patrons, but it also lays stress on social and educational betterment and pledges its aid to the government for the suppression of crime, vice, and immorality.

Other state and national orders

Of the minor social orders the Gleaners have been strong in Michigan, and the American Society of Equity in Indiana, Wisconsin, and adjoining states.

In order to dispel ignorance, bigotry, and narrowness, people must acquire the habit of reading worth-while books and periodicals. For this reason, every rural community should have access to a good public library, just as have the people residing in cities and towns. Various states have tried to solve this problem in different ways; but it seems that California, under a wise and comprehensive library law, has outdistanced all other states in the establishing of county libraries. When a county of the state votes to establish a library, it must automatically provide for a tax on all the assessed property for adequate support; and the county library may also be coördinated or consolidated with existing public libraries, as local needs may suggest. So much enthusiasm and healthy rivalry between the different counties has already been created that every county in the state will probably have an excellent, complete library in the near future. The county library plan is also found in Ohio, Oregon, and other states. In many cases the counties establish branch stations at country stores, schools, or other convenient local centers, which are supplied with books from the central library. Results of the

Rural libraries

county plan are gratifying, and the number of borrowers is steadily on the increase.

A great many states are operating successful traveling libraries in charge of a state commission, a state board, or a division in the extension department. These central boards employ state librarians and send out from headquarters collections of twenty-five to fifty books to small towns or rural community centers. At these places, local librarians receive the shipments, send out the books, keep a proper record of them, and lend them free of charge or at a nominal fee for a period of two weeks to any responsible person in the neighborhood. While traveling libraries cannot be classed among the most efficient and satisfactory systems, they are doing much good in thinly populated communities that are seldom reached by other methods.

Lastly, a number of states are giving annual aid to establish libraries, for pupils and adults, in every public school of the state. In this way, Minnesota added no less than $132,000 worth of library books to its public school libraries during the year 1916, and even her one-room country schools have libraries containing from 100 to 300 volumes each. The greatest objection to the system is that too often the selection of books has not been in the hands of competent persons and the reading material is not suitable for either children or adults of the district. The consolidated school is an ideal center for a rural library, and each school should take special pains to accumulate a well-selected list of library books for school and farm home. At present the American rural community is far behind the farming communities of other leading countries in its taste for good reading. The lack of substantial books in the average farm home is deplorable, and the character of the daily or weekly newspaper

commonly found is anything but elevating. Farmers have been inclined to look upon the reading habit as a luxury reserved for people of leisure and not as a necessity for all intelligent people, rich or poor. A reading community is invariably a progressive community, and good books are the cheapest and best possessions of any household.

Farmers' institutes are a phase of extension work fostered by the state colleges of agriculture or similar institutions, and they have played a leading part in the concerted efforts for agricultural improvement. As soon as these colleges were called upon to furnish speakers and lecturers on agricultural and social topics at various grange and farmers' meetings, they organized speaking bureaus to meet this demand, and out of these humble beginnings grew the present institute organizations.

Farmers' institutes

By a judicious combination of college experts and successful practical farmers, efficient corps of institute instructors have gradually been developed in nearly every state. A state superintendent of institutes carefully plans a series of farmers' meetings, or institutes, at various convenient centers, and sends out his workers, under a competent conductor, to give practical demonstrations and talks on all phases of farming. The institutes are usually from one to three days in length, but some of them last a week. At first they were somewhat crude, both in method and in the subject matter presented, and the pioneers had to overcome much skepticism and open hostility of the farmers to the new ideas in agriculture; but the work has grown mightily, so that today farmers' institutes, with an approximate annual attendance of four million men and women, are held in the forty-eight states.

State legislatures have generously added to the funds

of the agricultural college available for this purpose, until now the country spends over half a million dollars a year for institute work, covering almost every phase of farm life. The institutes have been preachers of righteousness and have dignified the calling of the farmer as few other organizations have done. They encourage not only scientific farming and better business methods, but also better homes, better schools, and every line of endeavor that makes better men and women out of country people.

Many communities have taken a step in advance of the general farmers' institute and hold a so-called short course instead, which lasts a week or two weeks instead of a few days. The principal difference between the short course and institute is that the former is organized mainly for regular daily class work in special subjects like the study of corn, grain, alfalfa, dairying, etc. In addition to this scientific study, a period or two each day may be given over to the discussion of general farm problems, as in the institutes. Short courses are naturally more systematic, specific, thoroughgoing, and progressive than institutes and accomplish more definite results. They are rapidly gaining in popularity. Regular courses in household management and in domestic science for women usually form a feature of the short course.

**Farmers' short courses and related extension service**

Closely related to the institutes and short courses are Institute Trains, Young People's Institutes, Round-up Institutes, Movable Schools, and Harvest Home Meetings.

A conspicuous example of private agricultural extension service is that of the International Harvester Company, under the leadership of the distinguished agriculturist, Professor P. G. Holden, formerly of Ames, Iowa. The company is doing a splendid work for increased crop production and the betterment of rural life.

Canning Club Day at the University of Chattanooga, Tennessee. These boys' and girls' club workers have come to Chattanooga for an annual field day, to demonstrate and exhibit their work and to plan for the coming year.

In the year 1906, the United States government and the General Education Board of New York City made a united effort to start in the Southern states a system of "Coöperative Demonstration Work" by stationing an agricultural expert in a number of counties to visit certain farmers at regular intervals and to show them how to raise better crops, with the simple tools and equipment at hand, by up-to-date methods of farming. Under the wise leadership and keen insight of Dr. Knapp (see Chapter VII, page 105) the experiment succeeded beyond all expectations, and in two years the work had spread to seven states. The demonstrator soon convinced the more intelligent farmers that crop rotation, good seed, better cultivation, systematic fertilizing, and the raising of more and better live stock were all paying propositions; and by example and precept they spread the gospel of better farming all over the South.

**Farm demonstrators, county agents, and farm bureaus**

Through the encouragement and financial aid from state colleges of agriculture, experiment stations, state legislatures, the federal government, and other institutions the "farm demonstrator," or "county agent" as he is more frequently called in other states, was ten years later found in practically every state of the Union; and since our country entered the world war, provision has been made to place an emergency county agent in every agricultural county in the country in order to stimulate food production and advance the cause of scientific practical agriculture. A tremendous impetus has thus been given to better farming, and the county agent or farm expert is likely to become permanently established in every agricultural county of the country.

To coöperate with the county agent, the farmers of each county in some of the states are urged to organize themselves into a farm bureau, whose officers become a sort of

directorate or advisory council to the agent and direct his work. Furthermore, state leaders of county agents, employed by the federal government and stationed at several state colleges of agriculture, give substantial aid and direction to both county agent and farm bureau. In this manner a gigantic, nation-wide coöperative extension movement has covered the country from ocean to ocean.

**Voluntary rural organizations and government coöperation**

Our national government is not inclined to be paternal and has usually been slow to respond to the most insistent agitation for legislation looking toward rural betterment. After years of persistent demands, in July, 1916, Congress finally passed the Federal Land Act, a veritable financial Magna Charta for the American farmer. By the terms of this act, the United States government joins hands with voluntary organizations of farmers to provide adequate credit for country people who wish to borrow money for legitimate farm needs, on easy terms of payment stretching over long series of years and at a low rate of interest. As a direct action of the government for the express benefit of the farmers, the act has no rival in American history.

The national government is also encouraging coöperative buying, selling, and shipping associations among farmers; and these are annually saving the country people thousands of dollars that were formerly lost in excessive profits to middlemen or speculators whose sole function is to pass on the farm products from producer to consumer. This wonderful field of organization is still in its infancy.

Another line of coöperative endeavor pertains to pure-bred live stock, crop improvement, poultry raising, dairying, and similar forms of scientific production. The scope and diversity of these enterprises call for a degree of executive ability, judgment, scientific knowledge, and special training unknown to farmers of a generation ago.

A host of community farmers' clubs have also sprung into existence in recent years and are making themselves felt in the economic, social, and educational life of the several communities. They work hand in hand with county agents, teachers, and ministers to build up a richer, fuller, and nobler country life. To support this elaborate program of rural organization and development, the new rural school must pledge its undivided coöperation, loyalty, and devotion.

A sketch of farmers' organizations would be incomplete if no reference were made here to the repeated attempts of farmers to embark upon the sea of politics, though disastrous shipwrecks have been the net results so far. The Farmers' Alliance, the Populist Party, and the recent Non-Partisan League movement have been the most conspicuous political ventures of the American farmers. These upheavals can be traced to periods of financial and economic stress; and, in a broad sense, they may be termed class protests against intolerable conditions and concerted efforts to gain by forced legislation what the government unwisely failed to grant.

Political organizations

The collapse of these party schemes has been due mainly to two causes: the proverbial independence and individualistic nature of farmers, which precludes wholehearted coöperation; and the appeal to class prejudice and false principles by some influential but unscrupulous and self-seeking leaders. These short-sighted leaders have undermined worthy causes by their folly and discredited their followers before the nation. As soon as country people have thoroughly learned the lessons of community coöperation, they will be ready for effective political coöperation, and some day the farmers will become a real power for clean politics and economic justice throughout the nation.

It would be manifestly unfair if in this program of rural organization we passed by in silence the work of the women. Although they seldom organize separately into pretentious associations or societies, their delicate feminine instincts, love of home and family, and reverence for things spiritual and religious have tempered many a movement and made life sweeter and happier. It is all the more fitting that due recognition should be accorded their services at this time when their national enfranchisement is nearing its culmination.

The farm women

Too long have the selfishness, stupidity, and gross ignorance of men denied their intelligent helpmates a legal voice in the affairs of government, whether local, state, or national. The lords of creation have for a century and a half been reiterating their undying belief in the God-given principle that all mankind is "created equal and is endowed by the Creator with the inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness," and yet have refused the boon of the franchise to their own equals, if not their superiors, in thought, refinement, and civilization! Let us hope that this monstrous injustice will soon be a matter of memory only.

At the annual meeting of the American Association of Farmers' Institutes in 1914, President Edward Van Alstyne paid to the women of rural America a beautiful but richly deserved tribute in quoting these lines:

A house is built of bricks and stones,
Of wood and beams and piers;
A home is built of loving deeds
Which stand a thousand years.

The men of earth build houses
With pillars, walls, and domes;
But the women of the earth, God knows,
The women build the homes.

## CHAPTER NINE

### The Rural Teacher

SOME day the American public must learn to place a higher value on its school teachers. There is much idle boasting among us about the exalted position which educators occupy and the esteem in which they are held by the people; but the naked truth is quite to the contrary. Rarely does the average teacher rise to a commanding position of community leadership. He is an itinerant public servant, roving from place to place in search of better pastures and seldom remains long enough in one position to stamp his personality upon the community or leave a lasting impression. There are, of course, intellectual giants and administrative geniuses in the faculties of universities, colleges, and other state institutions, and in the most desirable positions of the larger school systems, where a teacher will cast anchor for a time and become a tower of strength and a guiding hand in all worthy community endeavors; but these form an insignificant part of that vast host of teachers floating about the country and tossed by every educational wind that blows. Taken as a whole, the teaching force does not exhibit the strength which it ought to exhibit as molders of public opinion and pilots of the nation.

The nation slow to appreciate its teachers

With an average annual salary of $524.60 for all public school teachers in the United States, according to the latest available report of the National Bureau of Education,[1] with a host of immature and poorly trained recruits entering the ranks each year, with a term of service less than seven years in length, and with the majority of teachers looking

Responsibility of the public for existing conditions

[1] Report of the National Bureau of Education for 1916, Vol. II, page 30.

upon the profession as a temporary occupation and a stepping-stone to something better, the public has no reason to complain of the results. Until teachers can be assured of at least a living wage and of reasonable security of tenure of office, the number of those who will choose teaching as their life work will be negligible. But the consequences for community and country are serious indeed. History is full of examples showing that when nations have honored and exalted their teachers; employed men of character, ability, and maturity; and made salary commensurate with service, the teachers, in turn, have rejuvenated, rebuilt, and changed the whole trend of national life, lifting their countrymen out of dire distress and bankruptcy into prosperity and enlightenment. Directly, or indirectly, the teachers mold the thought of each generation and, to a large degree, hold in their hands the nation's destiny. Can the public longer refuse to accept the responsibility of strengthening the teacher's position?

The country community presents educational conditions much worse than those pointed out for the nation at large.

**Conditions of rural teachers still worse**

Exact statistics showing the conditions of rural teachers and urban teachers separately are not available, but reasoning from data that have been collected with much care,[1] it is safe to say that the average annual salary of country teachers employed in the one-room schools is less than $300, that the average age of beginners is but eighteen years, that their average term of service in the same school is less than two years of about 140 school days each, that more than one third of those now teaching had no professional training whatever, that four or five per cent did not complete the eighth grade before entering the teaching ranks, that only between two and three per cent are graduates of a normal school, and

[1] Bulletin 49, United States Bureau of Education, by H. W. Foght.

that less than one per cent have had superior training for rural leadership. To these handicaps must be added the following: The teacher of the one-room school has an average of thirty daily recitations; she is "inspected," rather than visited or supervised, by the county superintendent from one to three times a year; perhaps more than four fifths are their own janitors, and nearly all must walk from half a mile to two miles or more on a winter's morning to build their fires in a cold school building; suitable boarding places are becoming more difficult to secure each year; and the formidable disadvantages are constantly forcing the best teachers into the city systems.

Some educators are disposed to lay the blame for these conditions upon the rural teachers. They hold that if country teachers would make the temporary sacrifice, prepare themselves thoroughly for their profession, and brave the environment for a time, salaries would adjust themselves, their efforts would be appreciated, and the unfavorable conditions would disappear one by one. To a limited extent this is true, but such persons fail to see the one supreme obstacle. *They propose to adjust a primitive school to a complex modern rural life*, a physical impossibility.

Placing the blame

No, the responsibility for the present condition of rural schools does not rest primarily with the teacher, it rests with the educational leaders and with the people of the community. A clarion call to reconstruct a school system which is the relic of another age and condition, must be sent out by every state department, county superintendent, and rural school supervisor until country people realize the seriousness of the situation and provide the remedy. The one-teacher school must be eliminated, and the consolidated, graded school must take its place wherever it is possible to transport children. Buildings

and environment must meet the new conditions, and teachers must be adequately paid. Then, and then only, will country children get a "square deal" in education and rural people be placed on an equal footing with city people in training for efficient, intelligent living. If local communities cannot bear the total expense of this change, the state must come to the rescue with financial aid from the general revenue fund. Let us repeat once more, and with increased emphasis, the burden of this change rests with the educational leaders and the farmers themselves. They must make the first move.

**The new rural teacher in the new rural school**

With the reconstructed school and its ideal environment, the question of competent teachers will be speedily solved. Enthusiastic men and women will be glad to train for service in the consolidated school just as readily as teachers are now preparing themselves for the best city schools. The drawing power of the schools now in operation has already been fully demonstrated. A solemn obligation also rests upon every state superintendent and county superintendent charged with the administration of consolidated schools that the qualifications of teachers employed in them shall be second to no other teachers of corresponding grade. Furthermore, the broad academic and professional training of teachers for these new schools should be supplemented with special scientific, agricultural knowledge and a grasp of the fundamental principles underlying the rural life problem. The new teachers must possess vision, optimism, and a love for country life that will make them powerful instructors and exemplary companions of both children and adults. Their influence must reach far beyond the schoolroom.

Some contend that only those who are born and raised in the country should attempt to teach in rural schools, but

this is not necessarily true. A country-bred boy or girl, perfectly familiar with rural life as a whole, may in spite of that be so narrow and so lacking in all ability to lead and inspire others as to be entirely unfit for the position of country teacher, regardless of special training received. On the other hand, broad-minded and well-trained village or city people who love country life and have made special preparation for teaching in a consolidated school, sometimes make excellent rural teachers. Other things being equal, those born and raised in the country should be preferred as country teachers; but the attitude, personality, training, and enthusiasm of the individual have much to do with his success.

The most conspicuous shortcomings of the rural teachers, aside from their lack of professional training, have been their immaturity and ignorance of life outside the schoolroom. No greater error could possibly be committed than to select a young, inexperienced teacher as principal of a consolidated school. The head of such a school should by all means be a well-trained teacher of experience, preferably a married man who has entered upon the profession as his life work. So rapidly have men been eliminated from the rural teaching force that those who use the masculine gender in speaking of country teachers are either deceiving their unsophisticated readers, or else they are picturing conditions as they used to be years ago and as these writers would like to see them now. Without a doubt, the country school is today suffering from too much femininity. Natural, country-wide economic conditions are constantly draining the rural teaching force of its young men until, in the North Atlantic states, the number of men teachers has probably been reduced to about ten per cent of the total force. Scores of counties in various Northern states have only from one

**The consolidated school principal**

to half a dozen men teachers left in the one-room rural schools, and the reason is not far to seek. Any red-blooded young man of ability who may begin teaching in the one-room school will soon pass from that position to the principalship of a semi-graded, graded, or small high school or forsake the teaching profession for a more lucrative and permanent place in the business world. Those who remain in the rural school are, with few exceptions, of such mediocre ability that the profession and the schools would profit by their departure.

Every one must regret that existing conditions have robbed the country of its strong men teachers, but the pendulum should soon swing the other way as the consolidated school comes into its own. Some mature, experienced women teachers are just as capable of acting as consolidated school principals as well-trained married men, so far as the school management is concerned; but for the sake of keeping the older boys in the rural high school, for the sake of their leadership among men in the various community organizations, and for the sake of making changes in the principal's position less frequent, the heads of these schools should be men of the highest type.

**The teacher as a community citizen and community leader**

From the days of the famous Ichabod Crane to anno Domini 1918, the peripatetic rural pedagogue has been the mirth-provoking hero or heroine of newspaper men and magazine writers, and the despair of country school boards and county superintendents. Of late the order has received a new appellation; namely, "the suitcase teacher." Its members pack their grips, or suitcases, on Friday morning and take their belongings with them to the schoolhouse, where, promptly at four in the afternoon, "somebody" calls for the object of his choice and together they whirl away to the home in town for the delightful week-

end. Late Sunday night, or early Monday morning, stern-faced duty bids the wanderer, and owner of the inseparable suitcase, to return for another round of labors till four in the afternoon of the following Friday, and so on throughout the school year. In a way, no one can blame these birds of passage, for they are yet mere fledglings and too young to forsake the parental nest. Nor would the effect be very different if such teachers remained in the district throughout the week, for the Good Book says, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also"; and rarely do these folks find their treasures in the schoolroom or the school district. Pray, what shall the harvest be from the seed sown by these sowers between nine o'clock Monday morning and four o'clock Friday afternoon? Assuredly, there will be much chaff and little wheat to gather into the storehouse of life.

Now, seriously, does this condition prevail to any extent in the rural schools of today? Yes, unfortunately, it is more common than one would imagine; and worse still, there is no effective remedy for it until we "Oslerize" the conditions that give it birth and change the environment of the school. Happily, the description does not fit a large majority of the faithful, earnest rural teachers who are doing their best under every handicap, but it fits a considerable minority as the strait-jacket fits the convict; and the very schools that need "real" teachers most suffer continually from this maladjustment. Again let us repeat, the blame rests upon the people of the district, not upon the teacher. Districts that invest nothing in their schools receive nothing in return. Meanwhile innocent children are the chief sufferers.

How different this picture will be when people make an investment for their school that is really worth while. Then the district will become the teacher's home for the

school term and the principal will live among his patrons for twelve months of the year. The school manse will be as integral a part of the school plant as schoolrooms and blackboards; and all teachers will be citizens of the district in fact, and not in name only. The community's interest will be their interest and summer vacation will be only a brief interruption of pleasant labors in a chosen field and not the signal for canvassing the state and joining the teachers' agencies to bargain for new positions. Teachers will be proud of staying in one district long enough to witness the fruits of their labors in the lives of their pupils and to leave behind them an influence that will not be effaced for years to come. This is the status of real teachers, clean, virtuous, God-fearing men and women, full of enthusiasm for their chosen profession. Every community needs them, but the country community most of all, because here leadership, manhood, and womanhood are indispensable for a redirection of rural life.

The terms "teacher's manse" and "teacherage" seldom appeared in the pedagogical literature of this country until the dawn of the new century, but the words are beginning to have a familiar sound. Even before the advent of consolidated schools, teachers' homes or teacherages were occasionally erected in some country districts where suitable boarding places for teachers could not be secured. Teachers must have homes in which to live, and with some degree of comfort, whether teaching in town or in the open country; and if the neighboring farmers cannot or will not provide board and room for them, the only alternative is to provide a home at the district's expense. This at once opens up another grave question.

**The teacherage**

Unless rural schools are under the control of a county board of education with power to erect teachers' homes

for several near-by one-teacher schools, so that a number of young lady teachers may live together in one home, it is doubtful whether such teachers' homes should be built for the separate small districts. The mammoth, unorganized district in St. Louis County, Minnesota, mentioned in Chapter IV,[1] which is ideally situated to group its districts in this way, has successfully applied the method and possesses more teachers' homes for rural schools than any other district or county in the United States; but counties or districts similarly situated are so rare that the model is applicable only to an insignificant fraction of the country schools of the nation.

Are teacherages for one-room schools advisable?

In isolated cases, married men might be secured as teachers, who would make use of a teacherage, or in a few cases the young lady teacher might depend upon a widowed mother or older relative to act as housekeeper for her; but in other cases the system must be condemned as undesirable. Again, if a rural district is progressive enough to be willing to build a teachers' home for a one-room school, should its citizens not also be willing to go a step further and first effect consolidation with a neighboring district, unless insurmountable physical difficulties forbid? A teachers' home for a consolidated school of the open country is a self-evident necessity and a good investment for the district; but for a one-room school, which gives no assurance of being able to employ a married teacher with a family, it must ordinarily prove a failure.

Consolidated schools located in small country towns can usually secure for their teachers acceptable homes with private families of the community; but in the open country consolidations, a teachers' home beside the schoolhouse becomes an immediate necessity. No farm home

[1] See Chapter IV, page 33.

near the school could possibly provide accommodations for the principal and his family and for several other teachers, and teachers could hardly be expected to room and board in farm homes distant from the school and depend upon the school busses for transportation. This would be a most short-sighted policy for the district to pursue, because the teachers need to be at school morning and evening, before and after school hours, to prepare for the work of the day or of the next day. It is also most essential that teachers should live near the school so that they may be close at hand to aid and plan for evening community gatherings of all kinds; and finally, there is the social fellowship of co-workers, so needful and helpful in making rural school teaching enjoyable and profitable. In fact, every person of average intelligence can plainly see why a consolidated school should have its teachers' home as an integral and essential part of its school plant.

**The consolidated school and the teacherage**

So important did the General Education Board of New York deem the subject of providing suitable homes for rural teachers, that a few years ago it set aside a fund of $25,000 to aid in the building of comfortable teacherages, in typical rural communities, as an object lesson for the nation. The board's offer was to pay one half the cost of building and to furnish an attractive, sensible, modern rural home for country teachers if the district would agree to pay the other half of the cost. The officers of the board deserve the thanks of every farming community for their generosity and vision, in making a practical demonstration of the feasibility of this new idea.

**Encouragement given by General Education Board**

Three commodious, modern teachers' homes in Minnesota, located at Alberta in Stevens County, Nicollet in Nicollet County, and Petersburg in Jackson County have

received $3500 each from this fund, and the complete cost of each home exceeds $7000. The accompanying picture showing the Alberta home is an index of the character of these buildings. In addition to the three schools just mentioned, four others, in Mississippi, were aided to the extent of $1000 from the same fund.

Available data indicate that not less than 600 teachers' homes of all kinds have been erected in connection with the public school systems of the United States, but most of them are of the smaller type and more than one third of the number are located in the states of Texas and Washington. Teacherages for consolidated schools are reported as follows: Louisiana, forty-two; Mississippi, thirty; Iowa, fifteen; Tennessee, seven; Minnesota, six; North Carolina, five; Massachusetts, three; South Dakota and Illinois, two each; and Missouri and New Mexico, one each. A number of states report no teachers' homes, and others had no information on the subject.

A vivid account of the value of a teacherage to a consolidated school and also of the influence of consolidation on a rural community is given by Principal Fred Grafelman of Alberta, Minnesota, in the following letter:

ALBERTA, MINNESOTA
*January* 12, 1918

MY DEAR MR. ARP:

In answer to your favor of January 4, I am pleased to say that you will always find me ready to do the very best I can for the noble cause of consolidation which you are again expounding. In a few days I shall send you a good picture of the manse, which I know will reproduce well for publication.

The complete cost of the manse is about $7000, the teachers' floor being furnished with the best of furniture and other equipment, ready to move into at a moment's notice. A piano is the only modern home convenience which is omitted. The teachers have a most beautiful home where they are welcome. All of

their time is spent either in professional work or in professional leisure, as it ought to be with professional people. Their housekeeper does all the work. The teachers' time belongs to the school and to themselves. I am inclosing a reprint of Dr. Vincent's article from the *Review of Reviews*, in which he described the manse in detail. Ours is the first modern teachers' home in the United States.[1] The complete living expenses of each teacher, including the laundry, is from $22 to $24 per month. Last year it was less. The war prices make the difference. They are still getting their living about $10 per month cheaper than other teachers who get something inferior to these splendid, complete home comforts at Alberta.

The manse is proving a people's clubhouse, especially the basement. It is the means of securing just as good teachers for country boys and girls as city children enjoy, thereby giving them the same educational advantages. Our manse has twenty-one rooms, and is really a three-story building. We have space for three more good rooms in the large attic. We all feel happy in this beautiful home and try to realize that we are country teachers enjoying complete city home comforts. It compares splendidly with the best of homes. Think of bathing in it in wholesome comfort when we used to perform these requisites of civilized life in a snowdrift!

I believe that we have also the best plan of managing the teacher family. With us the teacher is supposed to give her time and some of her leisure to the district. We consider that only about half her work is done within the school walls. The housekeeper does all the work and our teachers get three square meals a day, well cooked and served, for a good teacher must be well fed, you know.

Ours was the school where Rural School Commissioner E. M. Phillips recommended not to consolidate because there was too much opposition to give us a chance for success. We went ahead with our plans, nevertheless; and our school was barely estab-

[1] Mr. Grafelman is probably mistaken in this, because a six-thousand dollar teachers' home at Rollo, De Kalb County, Illinois, was erected prior to the Alberta home.

Consolidated school and manse, Alberta, Stevens County, Minnesota

lished when it was chosen by the United States government to represent the rural consolidated schools at the Panama-Pacific Exposition, where we won the silver medal. I should not have come to Alberta six years ago, just when they were organizing, if it had not been for my absolute faith in the idea of consolidation. I reasoned that if we could make it a success at Alberta, it could easily be done in more favorable situations. Today, not a "kicker" remains. No one would go back to the old one-room school if given a chance. Everybody is converted. It has been at least two years since I have heard any one even discuss the subject. The superiority of our kind of school is an axiom here.

Our people feel proud of what their children have accomplished. This was the principal cause of converting our patrons, in spite of the higher taxes. In 1915 one of our girls won the state championship in canning and received a gold medal and $25 in gold in addition. Another won the silver medal for bread baking in the same year. Still another won the silver medal in canning the next year; and one of our boys held the county championship in corn raising for three successive years. Our corn-club boys have secured first, second, and third prizes for four years now, and one of our girls is the champion county speller. The school this year holds the county championship in corn growing, gardening, and pig growing, but lost out on canning. We have boys' and girls' glee clubs, corn club, bread-baking club, canning club, gardening club, and pig-growing club. Outside we have a live commercial club which works well with our school interests, a woman's club, and a Red Cross chapter. The school is the real social center and has changed the whole community. Nearly everything in the district is accomplished through this school.

For further information and opinion write to Carl Henrikson, the president of the board, and to William Causman, past president, both of whom were the bitterest enemies of the school at first, but now are its firmest friends.

I have written you at length to show what has been done under the most discouraging conditions in the state. Nothing

could prove the soundness of the consolidation idea more completely than the accomplishments under these extreme difficulties. To make our burdens heavier still, the school had to go through two bitter lawsuits in the beginning of its history.

Fraternally yours,

FRED GRAFELMAN

The following views on the teacherage were expressed by Dr. George E. Vincent, the present head of the General Education Board of New York, formerly President of the University of Minnesota:

A teacher's house or school manse is peculiarly necessary to the success of the consolidated rural school, which, it is now agreed, is to be the typical country school of the future. There should be built, in connection with the consolidated school, on the same grounds with the school building and heated by the same plant, a permanent house for the use of the teaching staff. This building should contain a wholly separate apartment for the principal and his family, living room and bedrooms for the women teachers, laundry, kitchen, etc. It should be equipped with a view to providing in the community a model of tasteful and economical domestic furnishing and decoration. The rentals and other charges should be so regulated as to provide for the maintenance, insurance, repairs, and renewals of equipment, but not for a sinking fund. The house should be regarded as a part of the school plant and included in the regular bond issue for construction. A privately owned manse in Illinois is netting eight per cent on an investment of $10,000.

The manse has a bearing in several ways upon the educational work of the school. Flowers and vegetable gardens are natural features of school premises which are also residence quarters. The domestic-science work of the school can be connected in valuable ways with the practical problems of manse management. The cost accounting offers a capital example of bookkeeping. The use of the school as a community center is widened and its value enhanced. The school as an institution takes on a more vital character in the eyes of the countryside.

Most of all is the effect upon the teacher. Comfortably heated, well-lighted quarters, comradeship with colleagues — and at the same time personal privacy — a satisfying, coöperatively managed table, independence of the petty family rivalries of a small community, a recognized institutional status, combine to attract to the consolidated rural-school manse teachers of a type which will put the country school abreast of the modern educational movement. It is futile to preach the gospel of sacrifice for the cause of rural education. There is no reason why rural teachers should be called upon to sacrifice themselves. They ought not to do it, and they will not do it. The school manse is not a fad, nor a luxury; it is a fundamental necessity.[1]

These changed conditions demand a changed attitude towards country life. To no one else does the call for rural leadership come with the same force as it does to the new rural teacher. Living among his patrons, beside the schoolhouse, he shares their ambitions, aims, and desires to make the community the best possible place to live in for himself, his family, his neighbors, and their families. He has come to stay for a term of years, is a citizen of the district like his neighbors, and wants school and community to prosper. His ideals, personality, and vision must give force and direction to every social, moral, and spiritual community enterprise.

**The call for rural leadership**

In a city the teacher is but one of many capable leaders who are called upon to guide and direct community projects outside of regular school activities; but in the country district the head of the public school is usually the man best fitted for community leadership and the man upon whom the progress and the moral tone of the entire neighborhood will largely depend. His possibilities and opportunities in this service are legion.

[1] See *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, September, 1916, page 168.

# CHAPTER TEN

## Transportation of Pupils and Cost of Consolidation

### TRANSPORTATION

ALL serious opposition to consolidation now centers about two principal valid arguments: the difficulty of transporting pupils, and increased taxation. Ostensibly, the opponents of the new idea fear transportation most, but nearly always the real fear is increased taxation. When consolidation was in its infancy and successful central schools were few and little known, the sponsors of the new idea were at first subjected to no end of ridicule and later to vindictive abuse. Excitement frequently ran high and neighborhood feeling waxed warm as people took steps to bring the question to a vote. The very novelty of the proposal was sufficient to draw the fire of most conservatives, and they were not slow to marshal an array of arguments against it. Some of these were plausible and valid, others were silly and fanciful. The following samples are selected at random:

**Arguments against consolidation**

"Why, the idea of it! The school tax for maintenance alone will be at least from a dollar to two dollars per acre annually. It will bankrupt every farmer. School wagons cannot travel in cold, stormy weather or on muddy roads, and the schools will be closed half the time. Children will freeze to death standing at the crossroads and waiting for a wagon that may never come. They will leave home at six o'clock in the morning and will not return till after dark at night. There will be quarreling and fighting in the bus, and drivers will indulge in obscene language before little children. Bus drivers cannot be hired at all or will demand as much salary as the United States rural mail carriers. Teams will run away and upset the rigs.

Careless drivers will cause accidents at railway crossings. A blizzard might come up suddenly and children and driver lose their way in it. A child may get sick at school five miles from home; then what? With a hundred or more children in one building, think of the danger from fire and contagious diseases! We don't want too much education for our children anyway or they will all stop working. Farmers' children need only an eighth-grade education. High schools and industrial studies are simply frills. We don't intend to make doctors and lawyers out of our children, and the district schools are good enough for them. If we consolidate, the children will not be at home mornings and evenings to help with the chores. The boys and girls will be so spoiled from riding in a fine bus that they will refuse to walk or do any hard work at home. We shall have to dress them up in expensive clothes to attend these high-toned schools. Consolidation is a wild scheme of some hair-brained county superintendent; it will never become permanent and in a few years every consolidated school will go back to the old system. We must have all roads graveled or paved before we can transport children. If consolidation is effected, every farmer will want to sell out and land values will be greatly reduced. Consolidation may work in some places, but it never will in our district. I read in my paper the other day that they are abandoning consolidated schools again in nearly every other state. Well, there's no use talking, it can't be done."

Letting in the light

The only reason for quoting these objections is to shed some light on the motives and ideas of men and women who oppose consolidation. A little study of the arguments reveals that they center about three principal points; namely: (1) some phase of the transportation problem; (2) the indifference of some

people toward better school facilities and an up-to-date education, and the sordid viewpoint of others who subordinate the child's welfare to his economic value as a farmhand; (3) the fear of increased school taxes (usually denied by an opponent when forced to defend his position).

The first point is by far the most important. In localities that are subject to severe winters or to muddy and heavy roads at certain seasons of the year, transportation of children is a serious obstacle to successful consolidation. If children can be transported safely, rapidly, and comfortably, all other objections may be speedily overcome. The best proof which we now have that transportation is possible, even under difficulties, is the fact that thousands of conveyances are daily transporting children to and from school in all parts of the country, and, as a rule, are keeping schedule time with a precision that is astonishing. Nevertheless, the terrors of transportation do haunt timid people, and thousands of farmers refuse to be convinced of the safety and feasibility of conveying children. Wagon routes should therefore be planned with the utmost care and should be intelligently supervised at all times. Happily, the experimental stage of transportation is now past. The ordinary difficulties and the errors formerly made are so well known that no one needs to be ignorant of them. It is especially incumbent upon every superintendent likely to have consolidated schools organized within his county to be thoroughly familiar with all details of the transportation problem.

The following general rules form a safe and reasonable basis for successful conveyance of children:

A district depending on horse-drawn conveyances should make six miles the extreme limit of any route. A haul of five to five and one-half miles is safer and better.

No matter how the routes are laid out, no child should be compelled to ride more than six miles in going to or returning from school. The conveyance should travel along the public highway and not drive up to the several farmhouses. Any child may reasonably be expected to walk half a mile or three fourths of a mile to meet the wagon at the highway or at a section corner. In exceedingly cold and stormy weather, parents must see to it that small children reach the bus safely and without needless exposure.

1. Routes

All drivers of school wagons must be mature and reliable persons of good moral character. No school board should accept the services of a driver whose character is not above reproach and whose habits are questionable. A sufficient bond, covering the contract price, to guarantee the faithful performance of his duties, must be required, and in case of a minor the bond should be given by the parent or guardian. The school board must have full control over drivers and routes at all times and may formulate new rules or alter a route whenever the welfare of the patrons demands it. They should delegate to the principal or superintendent of the school complete authority to supervise and direct the transportation. Drivers must have definite control over pupils en route, with power to eject from the vehicle a persistent and flagrant offender; but all corporal punishment must rest with the principal, to whom each offense should be promptly reported. No unbecoming language or ill-mannered conduct in pupil or driver must be tolerated.

2. Drivers

The hour for departure of each bus or vehicle must be definitely fixed, and a complete time-table showing the various stopping places en route must be in the driver's possession; and he must adhere strictly to the schedule under average condi-

3. Time schedule and report of driver

tions of roads and weather. On a route whose maximum length is five or five and one-half miles, no child should enter the bus before 7.40 A.M. If the roads are muddy, or travel is slow for other reasons, the rate per mile should be increased on such days to fit the circumstances, *but the time for departure of the bus from the starting point must not be altered.* If the busses cannot reach the schoolhouse on such mornings by 9 A.M., the opening of school may be deferred till 9.15 or 9.30 and the recesses and noon intermissions shortened accordingly. All consolidated schools having long transportation routes should close school promptly at 3.30 P.M., and every child should reach home by 5 o'clock. In gathering up the children, the wagon must wait a reasonable time at a stopping point for children who may be a little late. Each family along the route should know the exact time at which the wagon is supposed to be at that particular stopping point, and the driver should make a detailed report each day on a card suitable for filing, which will indicate every variation from schedule and reasons therefor. Mature women and older high school boys often make excellent drivers.

4. Conveyances

Authority to approve transportation rigs should rest with the state department of education in each state, and the superintendent should insist upon safe and comfortable conveyances. Where the law permits it, the district should own the vehicles. In cold regions they must be equipped with robes and blankets and must be heated by foot warmers or other artificial means and be so constructed as to protect children against wind, snow, or rain. Windows at both ends and sides of the vehicle are essential to prevent semi-darkness inside and to safeguard the morals of the children. The driver must ride with the children inside the bus, to insure proper order and control. Where the snowfall is heavy during

Domestic science class of consolidated school at Brewster, Nobles County, Minnesota

The Brewster, Minnesota, consolidated school and its auto busses. These auto trucks are operating on ordinary dirt roads and each brings in two loads of school children every morning.

the winter months, sleighs or runners for the wagons must also be provided. Recently auto trucks have come into extensive use in nearly every state to convey school children. While the initial cost of an auto bus greatly exceeds that of a horse-drawn vehicle, the former covers more territory, gives better service, and its operating expense is much less. Wherever a heavy touring car may venture to travel the country roads throughout the school year, auto transportation can be relied upon. Wisconsin, Minnesota, North Dakota, Nebraska, and other states depending upon ordinary dirt roads find auto transportation feasible and satisfactory in a great many districts.

Almost without exception, public conveyance of school children is superior to private conveyance, for several reasons. It is cheaper, because it takes fewer horses and vehicles, attendance is more regular, and children are more certain of proper protection against inclement weather. The sole advantage of private over public transportation is that it takes a few children to school more quickly and by a more direct route. In some states parents living beyond a certain distance limit from a schoolhouse are allowed a fixed sum per child in lieu of public transportation. For example, in South Dakota district boards may allow parents for this purpose the following compensation:

5. Public versus private transportation

10 cents per day for each child living 2½ miles to 3 miles from school
20 " " " " " " " 3 " " 4 " " ½ "
30 " " " " " " " 4 " " 5 " " "
40 " " " " " " " over 5 miles distant from school

This rate is reduced if more than one child from the same family is attending school. Except in sparsely settled districts or under peculiar conditions, private transportation is undesirable and seldom gives complete satisfaction.

6. Size of the consolidated district

The conveyance employed to transport children practically determines the size of the district. If auto transportation is feasible throughout the year, or if children can travel by trolley or steam railway, the district may, of course, be very much larger than one which depends upon the team haul. In the latter case a district containing from twenty to thirty-six sections of land is the most desirable. In exceptional cases it may exceed a township, or thirty-six sections; but in a state subject to cold weather or heavy roads, any district exceeding this limit usually presents some difficult problems of transportation. Unless special provision can be made for these, the larger district ought not to be organized. On the other hand, a small district with a low taxable valuation and less than seventy-five children of school age, is unsatisfactory, and if organized it should be capable of future growth. The topography of the district may necessitate some variation from the standard conditions suggested. Absolute rules governing individual districts cannot be formulated.

7. The cost of transportation

The cost of transportation varies in the several states, depending upon the general state policy and local conditions of roads, distance, and climate; but the average cost per rig or per child is reasonable indeed, and not the heavy financial burden that some people have been inclined to believe. The statistics given on the following page will shed further light upon the question.

Unfortunately most states have not given statistics on transportation of pupils the attention which the subject deserves; but the available evidence proves beyond a doubt that for the entire country, drivers of school wagons have so far been secured at an average salary of $50 per month; and the average cost per pupil per year has been

COMPARATIVE COST OF TRANSPORTATION IN DIFFERENT STATES, GIVING THE LATEST AVAILABLE DATA IN ANSWER TO A SPECIAL QUESTIONNAIRE SENT OUT DECEMBER 31, 1917. (Most of the figures obtained cover the school years 1915–1916 and 1916–1917. In some cases estimates only could be furnished.)

| STATE | TOTAL NUMBER OF CONSOLIDATED SCHOOLS | NUMBER OF PUPILS TRANSPORTED | NUMBER OF VEHICLES USED | COST PER VEHICLE OR DRIVER PER MONTH | COST PER CHILD PER YEAR | TOTAL COST PER YEAR |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Ind. | 706<br>530 (number transporting) | 46,997 | 2046 | $50.00 | $19.19 | $902,047.57 |
| Mass. | | | | | | 539,129.41 |
| Iowa | 196 | | 997 | 60.00 | | 474,865.00 |
| N. J. | | | | 52.92 | | 430,000.00 |
| N. Dak. | 447 (1916–17) | 1410 in 25 schools (1914–1915) | | 55.00 | 25.00 | |
| Minn. | 251 | 9,675 | 588 | 49.31 | 27.42 | 265,353.00 |
| La. | 600<br>200 (transporting pupils) | 7,466 | 352 | 42.20 | 23.49 | 103,427.00 |
| Miss. | 290 | 14,643 | 725 | 35.00 | | |
| Ga. | 166 (transporting pupils) | 3,619 | 231 | | 9.02 | 32,640.00 |
| Mo. | 3 (transporting pupils) | | 20 | 45.00 | | |
| Neb. | 40 | | 28 | 52.27 | | 10,451.50 |
| N. Mex. | 12 | | 26 | 60.00 | | 10,000.00 (app.) |
| Tenn. | 34 | | 23 | 28.00 | | |
| Nev. | 6 | | 5 | 40.00 | | |
| N. C. | 20 | | 32 | 50.00 | | |
| Idaho | 27 | | 97 | | | 35,000.00 |
| S. Dak. | 10 | | | 60.00 | | |
| Maine | | 7,897 | | | | 186,316.00 |
| Conn. | (72 schools transporting) | | | | | 117,739.11 |
| Mich. | | | | | | 64,707.23 |
| Ky. | 12 | 30 | | | | 16,932.86 |
| Okla. | 109 | 241 | | 40.00 | | 95,299.80 |
| Ohio | 539 (no other data) | | | | | |
| Wash. | 218 (see special report below) | | | | | |
| Ill. | 5 (depend almost entirely on private conveyance) | | | 60.00 | | |
| Wis. | 10 | | | 246.00 (per year) | | 7,629.21 |
| Vt. | 50 | 300<br>500 | 31 | 25.00 | | 186,933.18 |

NOTE. In the New England states much of the transportation is simply the conveyance of children to school who live a mile or more from school, and such children may not even be taken to a central or village school.

less than $25. Some exceptional difficulties in certain states are worthy of special attention; and the report from Washington indicates how perplexing and intricate it is for the school officers of that state. Their remarkable achievement should be an inspiration to all.

State Superintendent Josephine Preston, in a recent School Transportation Bulletin, gives these interesting items, among many others:

Almost every type of transportation, except the aeroplane and submarine, is used in this state to bring boys and girls to school. Washington, in many ways one of the most advanced states in the Union, is still in some respects a pioneer state. Despite its cities and its industrial development, through most of its area population is still scattered and steam or electric lines not fully developed. The deep snows of the mountains, the wet weather in the western part of the state, and a great variety of topography — including mountains, rivers, lakes, prairies, the ocean, and the Sound — present a number of difficulties to the transportation of pupils to and from school. Yet despite all these obstacles the state, county, and district promise every boy and girl in the state a good education; and if we cannot take the school to the boy or girl, we have to bring the boy or girl to the school. Indian ponies, bob sleds, wagons, rowboats, launches, railways, and auto busses have all been drafted into the service.

*Advantages of transportation summarized in the Bulletin*

1. Pupils are not exposed to rain and weather on their way to school. They do not sit in school all day with damp garments.

2. They arrive at school fresh and ready for work, not tired out by a long tramp.

3. They do not have to leave home as early in the morning.

4. They are under proper chaperonage while going to and from school — the time when immoral influences would otherwise have an opportunity to make an impression.

5. The attendance of the district is improved. The teacher does not spend her time with a mere handful of pupils.

6. Pupils who could not otherwise come to school are enabled to attend.

7. Regularly enrolled pupils are enabled to attend under weather conditions which would otherwise keep them at home.

8. Consolidation is made possible.

*Other facts gleaned from a questionnaire to which 163 consolidated schools out of a total of 218 replied*

| | |
|---|---|
| Number of districts using auto busses | 33 |
| Number using wagons, horses, or sleighs | 102 |
| Number using boats | 12 |
| Number of schools using two or more of above methods | 10 |
| Number of districts transporting but not replying | 69 |
| Number of districts not furnishing transportation where some pupils furnish their own | 6 |
| Number of districts where some pupils furnish their own transportation in addition to that furnished by the district | 66 |
| Total number of districts in which pupils furnish their own means without cost to the district | 72 |
| Number of districts allowing some pupils funds to pay for transportation in addition to maintaining public conveyance | 20 |
| Number of districts allowing some pupils funds for conveyance but maintaining no regular conveyance | 18 |
| Number of districts in which some pupils walk over two miles | 41 |
| Average expense per month per district for transportation in 65 districts | $107.07 |

*Items from some district reports*

This district is furnishing transportation by motor boat to children outside the two-mile limit. The father of a family living within the two-mile limit sometimes brings his children to school in his own launch at his own expense. — Mary Slifer, Clerk of District No. 44, Pacific County.

For eight other children, we are providing transportation across a cove. Their ages are from 6 to 12 years. For this service, the district is paying fifty cents per day every day the school is in session. The man doing the work furnishes his own rowboat. — John A. Benson, Clerk of District No. 54, Mason County.

We run two launches and two wagons. One wagon starts two miles from the schoolhouse and averages eighteen pupils. This wagon costs $35 per month. The other starts three and a half miles from school, hauls fifteen children, and costs $50. One launch travels five miles, carries sixteen pupils, and costs $40. It makes the trip in an hour. The other launch travels two and a half miles, carries eight children, and costs $20. It makes the trip in about 25 minutes. We do not pay any of the twenty-one pupils who furnish their own conveyance, but the district maintains a barn in which the pupils tie their horses free of charge. Total cost of transportation to the district this year was $145 per month. Next year we shall have to get a motor truck or add two wagons. — GEORGE W. BUKER, Clerk of District No. 20, Ridgeway, Clarke County.

Many similar letters might be quoted from the same Bulletin.

Minnesota, because of the severity of its long winters, has reason to exercise the greatest care in transporting children, and the state has wisely provided that all children in a consolidated school district who live beyond the two-mile limit must be conveyed to school at public expense or be furnished suitable boarding places near the school at the expense of the district. Since the state pays about ninety-five per cent of the entire transportation bill out of the state treasury, it demands first-class service and its transportation equipment is the best in the country. Yet the cost of conveying children is by no means excessive. For the year 1916–1917, 588 school wagons transported 9675 children at a total cost of $265,353, and of this amount the state contributed $249,798 — the limit to any one school being fixed by law at $2000 per annum. The average cost per driver per month was $49.31, and the total cost per pupil per year was $27.42, of which the state paid $25.82. Wisconsin paid its ten consolidated schools, as special aid, $4829.92 out of a total of $7629.21.

Hundreds of letters from parents and children living in all parts of the United States testify to the fact that they appreciate consolidation and the convenience of systematic transportation. A few such, published in the New Jersey Bulletin on Consolidation issued July, 1916, are here reproduced.

**What children and parents think of consolidation and transportation**

MORRISTOWN, NEW JERSEY
*October* 18, 1914

The conveyance for the children has been very satisfactory, being always on time and driven by a careful and competent man. The stage is in good condition, and comes prepared for all kinds of weather, such as curtains for front and sides, also foot warmers and robes for very cold days. Since having the stage, my children have not missed a day from school. Without it, it would be impossible for them to attend in bad weather. They are doing remarkably well. Mary, who is one year and two months in school, is in the third grade. Doris, aged 5, is going about a month and can read her Primer. Emily, who is in the eighth grade now, has done very well. — From letter written to Principal R. F. Schaffer of Morristown, New Jersey.

The following extracts are from letters written by pupils of Randolph County, Indiana:

I attended a district school nine years, but like the consolidated school much better. The teachers have more time with each class, as each teacher has only two or three classes. Then they teach manual training and domestic science, which is impossible in a one-room building. The building is well ventilated and kept at a certain temperature. Before they built the school only a few scholars went to high school, but now nearly all go.

I have spent three out of my four years in the consolidated school here, and I find that the advantages are much greater than in the former one-room school.

This makes the fifth year I have spent in the centralized school. During this time I have taken the eighth-grade work, and at present I am a member of the senior class. My home is in the farthest corner of the township, and I have always come in a school hack and for the past four years have driven one. I find the centralized school far superior to the district school in every respect — especially in the vocational training, which cannot be given successfully in the district school.

First, I will say that I would not go back to a small school, where the lower grades are taught, for anything. We have a room upstairs for cooking and sewing. I like this especially, for we learn all about cooking, and caring for the kitchen at home, which is a great help to our mothers.

This consolidated school gives the rural boy the benefit of a high school education, whereas only a few would go to the city high school. In this county ninety-five per cent of the eighth-grade graduates entered the high school.

Any one who has ever been to a consolidated school and has seen the work that is being done in the schools would fight for it and not against it. The Wayne building has good ventilation, for the air is drawn in from the outside and blown through the building by a large fan. Therefore the children breathe nothing but fresh air.

We have further testimony concerning the efficiency of the consolidated school and the experience in transportation, from a thorough investigation of it by Dr. Thomas E. Finnegan of New York.[1] He secured valuable and accurate information from the best-informed people of various states which have taken a leading part in the movement, asking each of them the following specific questions:

[1] See the New York Annual Report on Elementary Education, for 1917, Vol. II, page 409.

1. What effect has the establishment of consolidated schools had upon the value of farm property within the territory where such schools have been established?

2. Has the establishment of such schools been the means of providing a system of education which is adapted to the needs of agricultural life and, if so, in what way?

3. What is the general attitude of the people in the consolidated districts towards the continuance of the consolidated school, after it has been established and its work becomes effective?

4. Are better educated and trained teachers provided in the consolidated schools than were provided in the separate schools?

5. Have you been able to establish a system of transportation for the children which is satisfactory to the people generally, and which does not operate as a hardship upon the children?

The answers may be summarized as follows:

1. Land values have a tendency to increase rapidly as soon as a consolidated school is well established.

2. The agricultural and industrial training in particular has aroused great enthusiasm for the new school, and the work of the consolidated school is far superior to that of the former schools.

3. Even where opposition is strong to consolidation when first established, people's attitude is completely reversed within a few years. Scarcely a district can be found which would go back to the old system after a school has been in operation for a year or more.

4. The teaching force compares favorably in education and ability with those employed in progressive city systems, and good teachers are easily obtained for the consolidated schools.

5. Real hardships in the transportation of children are

not often met. Long routes and careless supervision of drivers have been the principal sources of trouble in the earlier consolidation projects. A businesslike management and district ownership of wagons quickly overcome most of the objections.

Dr. Finnegan has also received many letters from districts in his own state where consolidated schools are in operation, of which the following is typical:

Worcester, New York
*September* 15, 1916

Dr. Thomas E. Finnegan
Assistant Commissioner
Education Department, Albany, New York.

Dear Sir:

I am owner of a farm in Union Free School District No. 3, Westford Township, Otsego County, New York. In 1915 six school districts consolidated.

I was strongly opposed to the consolidation and to the new school, and I harbored resentment toward our district superintendent for establishing it. After one year's trial and observation I have changed my mind. We are delighted with the new régime. Our twelve-year-old girl passed the Regents' examination in English, geography, arithmetic and United States history during the year. She is now entering the high school department.

For six district teachers in poorly equipped buildings we have received five normal school and college graduates in one modern plant. The work is now graded and scientifically conducted, while an automobile school-bus calls at our door daily to transport the children. No one with a family to educate would willingly go back to the old conditions.

Very truly yours,
L. J. Coe

No one can read a letter like that without wondering how much longer it will take the average American farmer to sense the real value of the consolidated school.

## THE COST OF CONSOLIDATION

Under ordinary conditions a rural district must pay a higher tax to support a consolidated school than it does to support a one-room district school. The reasons for this are self-evident. While the average cost of education per pupil per day of actual attendance in a small school is known to be excessively high, it must not be forgotten that the ideal consolidated school offers so many additional advantages over the one-room school that the aggregate cost to the new district can hardly fail to exceed that of the former district schools.

**Comparative cost of consolidated and district schools**

In the first place, a new central building is usually required whenever a large consolidated district has been formed. Such a building, capable of housing from 150 to 300 pupils and having adequate high school quarters and industrial departments, will cost from $25,000 to $50,000, according to standard requirements and local conditions in the various states. Even if it replaces from five to ten one-teacher schools, the old districts would very likely spend less than half that sum for new one-room buildings in several districts. An increased tax, therefore, to meet the interest on the building bonds and gradually retire them, would be inevitable.

In the second place, while the number of grade teachers in the new school would probably be less than the number formerly employed in the district schools, the extra high school teachers and principal, whose salaries would be relatively high, would mean at least a slight increase in the cost of instruction.

In the third place, the expenditure for transportation is an entirely new and important item, which alone will decidedly increase the school tax.

Finally, the equipment and upkeep of the new manual-training and other industrial departments and the science laboratory call for extra expense, because none of these played an important part in the district schools; and an additional item may also result from the employment of a janitor, since district school boards frequently expect the teacher to be her own janitor.

Unless, then, the state grants substantial special aid to consolidated schools to help defray the extra expenses resulting from these improvements, the school tax of the district will increase materially. A concrete example will make this perfectly clear. Suppose that a township in the Upper Mississippi Valley, which has been enrolling a total of 180 pupils in nine small one-teacher schools, should consolidate the entire nine districts into a single district and spend $50,000 for the erection and equipment of an up-to-date school building. Because of the added high school department and industrial work, the enrollment of the central school would increase to 200 pupils, at least, during the first year and would soon exceed that number. The annual cost, for a term of nine months, without the retirement of the bonds, would be substantially as follows:

**Illustration**

| | |
|---|---|
| Annual salary of the superintendent for twelve months | $1200 |
| Annual salary of one high school teacher for nine months | 675 |
| Annual salary of five other teachers for nine months | 2700 |
| Annual salary of janitor for nine months | 540 |
| Fuel bill and janitor's supplies | 500 |
| Library and textbooks for 200 pupils | 200 |
| Other supplies for pupils, including apparatus | 400 |
| Insurance, incidentals, and upkeep of building | 400 |
| Interest on $50,000 bonds at five per cent | 2500 |
| Salary of ten drivers at $50 per month | 4500 |
| Administrative expenses of school board | 175 |
| Total cost of school for the year | $13,790 |

In contrast with this, the cost of each of the nine one-room schools, by allowing for an investment of $3000 in a new school building and reasonable equipment, would average as follows for a term of nine months:

| | |
|---|---|
| Salary of teacher at $60 per month | $540 |
| Books for twenty pupils | 20 |
| Other supplies and apparatus | 40 |
| Fuel and care of building during school term | 75 |
| Annual upkeep of building and insurance | 50 |
| Interest on $3000 bonds at five per cent | 150 |
| Administrative expenses of school board | 25 |
| Total cost of school for the year | $900 |
| Total cost of nine schools | $8100 |

If every dollar of the school tax were borne by the local township or school districts alone, and both personal and real property were considered as one item for each of the 144 farms of 160 acres in the township, the school tax for the consolidated school would average $95.76 per quarter-section farm, and $56.25 per quarter-section farm for the several district schools. It will be observed further that nearly four fifths of the entire increase in school tax is due to the cost of transporting pupils.

Analysis of cost and results

In fact, if we bear in mind that a substantial brick building should last at least forty years and that the one-room frame buildings would need to be replaced by new ones in twenty or twenty-five years, the bond issues for a term of forty years would nearly equalize between the two systems and the difference in cost result almost entirely from the expenditure for transportation in the consolidated district. In justice to the rural people, therefore, the entire cost of transportation should be defrayed by the state from the general revenue fund, for it represents the natural handicap to which farmers are subject in order to get their children to a good school, a

condition which does not confront urban or village people. Another important consideration is that, in practically every state, a portion of the cost of education is derived from general state levies, special state aid, or permanent school funds invested, so that from one fifth to one half the total school tax is paid by the state, and the district tax for the consolidated school here described would most likely be somewhere between $50 and $75 per quarter-section farm, and that of the one-room schools from $28 to $40 for the same size of farm.

These figures will, of course, differ in the several states, and in different sections of the same state, but any variations will not materially alter the comparative cost of the two systems. In a sparsely settled township with a hundred or fewer school children enrolled, the new central buildings could be erected and equipped for one half or two thirds the cost, the faculty be reduced to four or five teachers, and several of the school wagons be eliminated. This might reduce the total cost of the school to less than $7500; but, on the other hand, such a township would probably have but five or six district schools instead of nine, and its district school expenditures would correspondingly be lowered to $4500 or $5000. It would be still less if no allowance were made for new one-room buildings and the interest charge on bonds were eliminated; and it would be reduced further still if the cost of a seven or eight months' term in the one-room schools were compared with that of a nine months' term in the central school. Since the average length of the school term in many country districts is but seven or eight months, the total school expenditures of all the districts combined, before consolidation, is less than half the total expenditures of the consolidated district. This bears out the assertion made in Chapter IV, under the head of "Rural School Taxes,"

that in order to get any kind of satisfactory support for our rural schools the local tax in most country districts must be doubled.

So far this comparison has dealt with aggregate cost and total amount of school taxes only, without reference to educational values. In the one case the child walks to a school capable of furnishing him but the modicum of a modern education, while in the other he is conveyed at public expense to a school that offers him a complete high school course, provides for him all the comforts and social opportunities of a first-class school, and places him on an equal footing, educationally, with the urban child. To say, then, that the training in the consolidated school is worth double that of the one-teacher school is conservative indeed. But another phase of the comparison deserves special attention.

The other side of the picture

The invariable increase of the average attendance in days per pupil, and the increased enrollment of the central school over the former district schools, are two important features of consolidation everywhere. These factors work some remarkable changes in the comparative cost of the two systems, if due allowance be made for attendance and enrollment. The drawing power of the consolidated school is best appreciated from the following data gleaned from the reports for 1916 of several states. In Oklahoma, for example, the average daily attendance in 59 consolidated schools for the year was 158 pupils, against 102 pupils in the one-room schools of this territory before consolidation, or an increase of 55 per cent. In Tennessee, 34 consolidated schools showed an increased enrollment of 29.4 per cent, and an increase in average daily attendance of 42.77 per cent, over the former district schools. Similarly the consolidated schools of North Dakota, with an average school term of nine months, had an average daily attend-

ance of 94 per cent of the enrollment, while the one-room schools displaced had but an average daily attendance of 64 per cent of the enrollment for a term of seven and a half months, which makes an increased total attendance of 76.3 per cent for the consolidated schools.

Similar conditions exist in other states where consolidation has had a fair trial, but exact data are difficult to obtain because of the meager state-wide reports on consolidated schools. It is quite probable, therefore, that the total attendance in days for all pupils in the consolidated schools exceeds that of the former district schools by nearly 50 per cent. If this be true, the cost of schooling per pupil per day of actual attendance in the consolidated school is about equal to the cost per pupil per day of actual attendance in the former district schools. It may even be considerably below that of the small rural school with an enrollment of ten pupils or less. This is what most educators have in mind when they assert that the consolidated school costs no more, or costs less, than the one-room school. It is the scientific method of computing the cost of education and the true measure of actual accomplishments; but the statement appears wholly untrue to the average farmer, *who is thinking of the aggregate cost of education per farm or per school district.* The confusion of these two items has caused much misunderstanding between the exponents and opponents of consolidation, and every real friend of the country school should keep the distinction clearly in mind and help to correct any mistaken notions on this important subject.

Economy was at first undoubtedly the predominant thought which led to the closing of small rural schools and the transfer of pupils to conveniently located adjoining schools. As a result of this, the consolidated school has suffered much from short-sighted persons who cared less

for the educational advantages accruing to the children under the new management than they did for saving the district a few dollars in school taxes. The economy argument appealed especially to the voters and taxpayers living under the pure township organization, where school taxes were uniform for the entire township. If pupils from the small, outlying rural schools could readily be transferred to villages conveniently located within the township without necessitating an increased teaching force or an enlargement of the school building in the central school district, a financial saving for all taxpayers usually resulted from the closing of such schools. This was true more particularly if the children transferred furnished their own conveyance to the central school or their parents received but small compensation for this private transportation. Even where all the children of the closed schools were transported at public expense, there was still a possible saving so long as no extra teachers were required in the central school, and, incidentally, the children enjoyed and profited by the greater educational opportunities of the central graded school.

Principal motive back of the early consolidation movement

The early history of consolidation in the New England states and Indiana is full of examples of this kind, and similar conditions prevailed in many of the union schools of the South. Today the question of financial saving and lower tax rates in consolidation has been subordinated entirely to that of educational betterment. Instead of appealing to the cheap and shoddy, we emphasize up-to-date school plants, trained teachers, and safety and comfort of transportation — the best in education that a school district is able to provide.

# CHAPTER ELEVEN

## Past, Present, and Future of Consolidation

CONSOLIDATED schools have existed in some parts of our country for many years, but until recently notable progress in the movement was confined to a few pioneer states. In the last decade, however, the leaven of consolidation has permeated every state, and the influence of the new school has penetrated to the remotest regions of rural America. While still in its infancy and lacking the legal authority to make it a live issue in some of the states, in others wise legislation and enthusiastic champions have accelerated its growth. The history of consolidation is interesting and instructive, but limited space permits only a bird's-eye view of its progress in the several states.

Consolidation not a new idea

Massachusetts is credited with having struck the first blow at the inefficient one-room school by the passage of the following act in 1869: "Any town in the Commonwealth may raise by taxation or otherwise and appropriate money to be expended by the school committee in their discretion in providing for the conveyance of pupils to and from the public schools."

Massachusetts

It appears that the law was not actually tried out until 1874, when a small school in the town of Quincy was abandoned and its pupils were transported to a neighboring one-teacher school. Outside of saving the taxpayers a little money, no educational benefits resulted from this experiment, but in 1875 a real consolidated central school building was erected at Montague. This school serves a territory of about twenty sections and has a complete high school department accredited by the New England college entrance board. It has been a complete success

from the start and has transported pupils for over forty years. In 1879 another excellent school at Concord replaced five small district schools and later absorbed all the small schools of the township.

When the state abandoned its district organization in 1882 and substituted the township unit, consolidation of schools and transportation of pupils advanced rapidly. The growth is best appreciated by the amount of money which the state expends annually for the transportation of pupils, as shown by the following schedule:

AGGREGATE COST OF TRANSPORTATION

| YEAR | AMOUNT EXPENDED |
|---|---|
| 1888–89 | $22,118.38 |
| 1890–91 | 30,648.08 |
| 1895–96 | 91,136.11 |
| 1900–01 | 151,773.47 |
| 1905–06 | 236,415.40 |
| 1910–11 | 329,857.13 |
| 1915–16 | 493,605.10 |
| 1916–17 | 539,129.41 |

Out of a total of 19,003 persons on the teaching staff of Massachusetts in 1916, only 965 were engaged in teaching one-room schools. The state is without a peer in the successful elimination of its one-room schools.

Indiana

Indiana, the pioneer of consolidation in the Mississippi Valley, heads the roll of honor in the number of pupils conveyed and in the number of high-class consolidated schools. The Hoosier commonwealth celebrated its centennial existence in 1916, but sixty years before that event her state superintendent of public instruction, the Hon. Caleb Mills, penned, in his annual report, these significant lines on the efficiency of the one-room school:

The superior wisdom and economy of the large over the small districts become apparent on a fair exhibit and impartial com-

parison of their legitimate results. A township of thirty-six square miles may be divided into districts of two miles square, as many of them really are. Thus carved, it presents nine cozy quasi-corporations with a corresponding number of children, often so small as to forbid the establishment of a school, or if established, so insignificant as to belittle the enterprise and leave an unfavorable impression of its real character and consequence on the public mind. These nine schools, enfeebled by their numerical poverty, languish, droop, and become so attenuated that it is difficult to ascertain whether there is any literary life or activity in either teacher or taught. It is a very natural conclusion that is often reached and acted on by trustees, that the schools are too small to justify the employment of first-class teachers, and therefore an inferior grade is sought and installed in these centers of literature and science to engineer their charge through the sublime mysteries of their own ignorance, put in their time, and obtain a certified claim to a portion of the public funds. A more legitimate conclusion from given premises was never reached than that small districts insure small and ill-furnished structures, short terms, incompetent teachers and corresponding instruction, lifeless schools, and unawakened intellects.

The effect of this indictment of the small school was never forgotten, and the zeal of Indiana's undaunted leaders never fagged, until today the state's record of achievement stands supreme. Out of a total of 706 consolidated schools last year, 530 transported 46,997 pupils at a cost of nearly a million dollars, and 430 of the schools were of high school rank, employing four or more teachers. Indiana has permanently closed the doors of more than 2000 one-room schools; but this brilliant record was the result of the following favorable conditions:

1. The township system of school organization prevails throughout the state, and a single trustee has almost complete control over all the township schools.

2. The state has strengthened the school officer's posi-

tion and authority by the passage of three important laws; namely, (*a*) the compulsory education law of 1899, which not only compels the attendance of pupils throughout the school year but allows the trustee to transport all pupils living more than two miles from a public school; (*b*) a law, passed in 1901, compelling the closing of all schools with less than an average daily attendance of twelve pupils and making it optional with the trustee to close schools whose average daily attendance is between twelve and fifteen pupils if in his judgment better results may be obtained by consolidation; (*c*) an act, passed in 1907, making transportation of pupils in all consolidated schools compulsory.

This legal backing and the enthusiastic support of teachers and superintendents has placed Indiana in the front rank of the consolidation movement. The following letter from County Superintendent Lee L. Driver, of Randolph County, the banner county in consolidation in the United States, indicates the attitude of Indiana's progressive superintendents on this great question:

WINCHESTER, INDIANA
*January* 28, 1918

MY DEAR MR. ARP:

I received your bulletin on consolidation of Rural Schools. It is the solution of the country schools.

When I was elected superintendent of this county, ten years ago, I was against consolidation of schools, but my first year's experience convinced me of my mistake. We had at that time 131 one-room schools. We now have but eighteen, and at least four of these will be abandoned this year. We have nineteen consolidated schools in the county, one two-room, the other eighteen ranging from five to twelve rooms. Fifteen of these schools maintain a four-years' commissioned high school. Eight years ago, our high school attendance in township commissioned schools was sixty-one. This year it is 683. Our per cent of

eighth-year graduates to enter high school has increased from an average of forty to ninety-three; 230 out of 242 eighth-year graduates in 1915 entered high school that year. In 1916, 232 out of 240 entered high school, and in 1917, 243 out of 253.

We are now transporting 2603 children at public expense. Three schools go by traction, and the remainder are transported in 112 school wagons, seventeen carriages, and ten auto busses.

Three of our schools are located in towns, three others are near towns, and the remainder are out in the open country. Three of them have school cottages, and two have the janitors (single men) living in the building. All these buildings are equipped with the flush system of toilets, and drinking fountains. Six of them have shower baths. Each is equipped for manual training, sewing, cooking, and agriculture. Each also has a piano and some of them have two, a victrola, and a special teacher of music and art. Eleven maintain five-number lecture courses in addition to many local entertainments and community meetings. Eighty-nine and one-half per cent of our children are now in graded schools.

We have spent $600,000 in this county the past nine years, in school improvement; so you can see why I am especially interested in the consolidated school movement.

Very truly yours,

LEE L. DRIVER

*Superintendent Randolph County*

Ohio

Kingsville Township in Ashtabula County, Ohio, was granted the right to defray the cost of transporting pupils to the public school, by a special law passed in 1894; and this gave an opening wedge for consolidated or "centralized" schools, as they are called in that state. The law was extended at the next session of the general assembly to apply to a few other counties, and in 1898 was made general throughout the state. It was supplemented in 1904 by another act which authorized the township board to close the schools

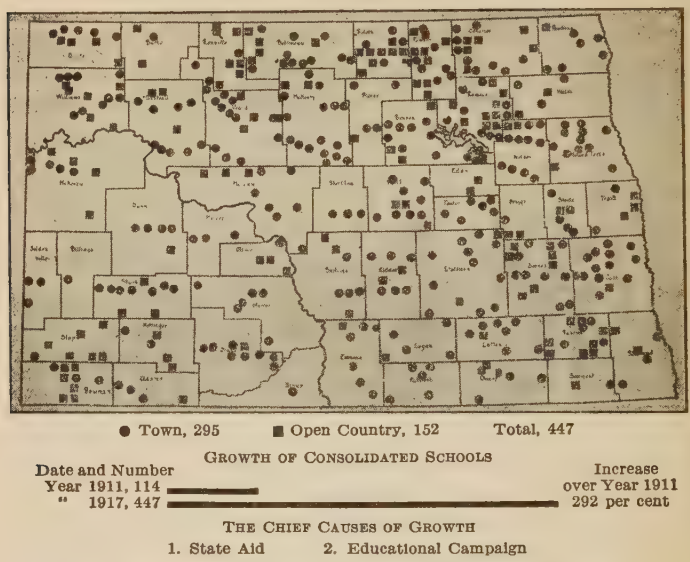
of any and all sub-districts and to transport the pupils to a central school, except that a school with twelve or more pupils could not be closed against the wishes of the majority of the voters in the district. The effect of these laws was immediate and pronounced, and the state had 178 central schools in 1910, 358 in 1914, 468 in 1915, and 539 in 1916.

Official state-wide reports on consolidation are meager, but County Superintendent J. C. Neer of Champaign County reported in 1917 that $235,000 had been spent in his county alone for central school buildings during the past five years, and that 1273 pupils were being transported daily in seventy-one school wagons; no school once consolidated had ever made an attempt to go back to the old way, and less than thirty one-room schools remained in the county. Preble County, another of the progressive counties in the state, has consolidated more than two thirds of its small schools. All the central schools employ not less than five teachers and offer from three to four years of high school work.

North Dakota

That the compelling force back of the consolidated school is not wealth or density of population, but rather an enlightened, energetic, and progressive rural citizenship, is fully demonstrated by the youthful state of North Dakota. A look at its interesting Consolidated School Map shows that the sparsely settled counties of the northern half of the state easily lead the wealthier counties of the southeastern portion in the number of consolidated schools. In proportion to its population, North Dakota holds first place in the Union in the number of its consolidated schools.

Of the 447 schools reported in 1917, 295 are classed as town or village consolidations and 152 as open-country consolidations. The number of consolidated schools has increased 295 per cent in the past six years. Naturally,




Map showing consolidated schools in North Dakota
*(Prepared by N. C. Macdonald, Superintendent of Public Instruction)*

many of these districts pay a comparatively high tax, but they do it cheerfully and have no desire to return to the former one-teacher schools under any circumstances. In twenty-five open-country consolidations for the year ending June, 1915, the average area per district was thirty-one sections; the assessed valuation was $120,000, varying from a minimum of $80,000 to a maximum of $180,000 per district; and the average rate of school tax was 21 mills, varying from a minimum of 11 mills to a maximum of 31 mills.

Special attention should be directed to the fact that the states of Massachusetts, Indiana, Ohio, and North Dakota (except four counties) are all organized on the township plan, but Ohio has lately taken another step

and advanced to the county system of organization. This accounts very largely for the phenomenal growth of consolidated schools in all of them. Progress is still easier and simpler where a strong centralized county system prevails, as may be seen in some of the Southern states; but under the district system, consolidation is comparatively slow unless stimulated by substantial grants of state aid.

Success greatest under township and county systems

Louisiana is the leader in the movement for the pure county type of school. The blessings of the new school entered the state by a side door, so to speak. A cyclone in the parish (county) of Lafayette had destroyed a one-room school building during the school term, and in order to avoid loss of time for the children, two public-spirited citizens of the district offered the board a conveyance free of charge to take the children to a neighboring graded school in the town of Scott. This venture proved so successful from the beginning that the parish board decided not to rebuild the one-room school but to furnish a wagonette and make the transportation permanent.

Louisiana

From this strange beginning in 1902, the idea spread rapidly, so that by 1917 the state had a total of 600 consolidated schools; but out of this number only 200 actually transported children at public expense, and only 100 had four or more teachers. Most of the schools are, therefore, of the smaller type. The parish boards have power to resort to different methods of transporting children from closed to central schools. They may provide wagonettes and hire men and teams; they may hire men who furnish their own teams and wagonettes; they may also pay a parent a certain sum per month for each day his child attends a central school; or they may let the

smaller children attend a one-room school near home and pay the older children for attending a central high school. Forty-two of the consolidated districts have erected teachers' homes in connection with their schools.

Another Southern state with a good record in consolidation is Mississippi. Of 290 such schools actually in operation and transporting pupils last year, 190 employed four or more teachers each, and 725 wagons were used to transport over 14,000 children, at an average cost of $35 per month per wagon. The state has provided thirty teachers' homes, and four of these received $1000 building aid from the special fund of the General Education Board mentioned in Chapter IX.

Mississippi

The road to consolidation in states where the district system prevails is full of trials and tribulations. The reluctance of the voters in each little school district to give up the local organization is so great that strong protests against any change often follow the rural representatives into the halls of the state legislatures, in order to prevent the passage of laws favorable to consolidation. Even when such laws have been enacted, action usually depends upon local initiative to petition and call an election before schools can be consolidated. For this reason only three states having the district form of organization — Minnesota, Iowa, and Washington — have so far made much progress in rural school consolidation. To make success possible, these states had to provide by law for two things: (1) grant special state aid for transportation, equipment, or maintenance as an inducement to consolidate; and (2) let the majority vote of the entire territory decide the question, after one fourth or one third the resident freeholders have petitioned for an election. Whenever districts are allowed to vote separately, and a

Difficulty of consolidation under district system

majority vote in each district is required before consolidation can be effected, progress moves at a snail's pace.

Minnesota's experience in this movement is illuminating. Its first consolidation law, permitting two or more districts to consolidate but requiring an affirmative majority vote in each district separately and granting no financial state aid, was passed in 1901, and during the next ten years only one large consolidated school at Lewiston and a few minor ones were established. But in 1911, when a new law was enacted granting liberal state aid and requiring only a majority vote of the entire territory affected, the response was immediate and gratifying. Two hundred and fifty excellent consolidated schools, whose standards in buildings, equipment, teaching force, and transportation facilities are second to none in the nation, have been the fruits of this law. To encourage schools of the highest type, the state grants a building aid of one fourth the cost of the new building, but limits the maximum grant for any building to $2000. In addition, it offers annually the sum of $500 as "Consolidation Aid," $150 for each grade teacher and $250 for each high school teacher employed, until this additional aid for a complete high school reaches the sum of $1800 per annum. It also pays the entire transportation bill up to $2000 a year. An accredited rural high school may, therefore, receive a total of $4700 annually for consolidation, transportation, and high school aid. This does not include the so-called "state apportionment" per pupil derived from the interest on the permanent school fund, which is now about $7 for every child between five and twenty-one years of age who attends not less than forty days during the school year, so that $1400 more would be added to the above sum if 200 pupils were

Lessons from Minnesota

enrolled in the school. Consequently, the state defrays practically one half the cost of maintenance of a good Minnesota consolidated school, and that policy has been the secret of the state's success in consolidation.

Iowa and Washington

The consolidation laws of Iowa and Washington are similar to that of Minnesota, except that the special state aid in either state is much less. In Iowa, the maximum annual aid for maintenance is $750, and there is also an initial aid for equipment amounting to $500. Iowa's record of 196 consolidated schools by June, 1917, four fifths of which had been organized in the last three years, shows what strides the state is making in consolidation. A great many of these central schools are located in towns of 2000 inhabitants or fewer, so that all but one of the 196 schools are of the larger type and offering two or more years of high school work. The picture of the beautiful high school building at Spirit Lake, Dickinson County, chosen for the frontispiece of this book, is an index of the generous support which the people give these schools.

Washington's achievement in establishing 218 consolidated schools up to the present writing is remarkable because of the difficulties encountered in the transportation of pupils.[1] The state aid amounts to about $200 annually for every abandoned district school. Texas is the only state which exceeds Washington in the number of teachers' homes.

Consolidation in other states

Among the Eastern states, New Jersey ranks next to Massachusetts in the number and excellence of her consolidated schools, and New York's progress is gratifying. Pennsylvania has accomplished the least in proportion to its size and population, a condition due largely to the topography of the

[1] See Chapter X.

country. West Virginia faces the same handicap, but twenty-four schools are now transporting pupils, and others have been consolidated without transportation. In the Southern states there is rapid progress everywhere, favored by the county system of organization.

Oklahoma and Arkansas have both succeeded in establishing over 100 consolidated and union schools, in spite of the fact that they are operating under the district system. Their latest consolidated schools and school buildings compare favorably with the better class in other states. California, Oregon, Colorado, Missouri, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Illinois have accomplished little because of the district system, and because of the fact that the state laws require an affirmative majority vote of each district before consolidation can be effected. In South Dakota twenty-five per cent of the voters in each district may petition for an election, but it requires a three-fourths majority vote to carry the election. This large percentage is difficult to obtain, and the state has but few consolidated schools.

No better illustration of the effect of unfavorable legislation and the district system on the one hand, and distinctly favorable laws and the township organization on the other, can be found than in the neighboring states of Illinois and Indiana. The latter stands at the head of consolidation in the Mississippi Valley, and the former at the foot. In Illinois there has been until recently no law permitting the transportation of children at public expense, and the state law requires further that before two or more districts can consolidate, a majority of the votes in each district must be in the affirmative. Consequently, Illinois has but five consolidated schools, against more than 700 in Indiana.

Utah has barely a dozen one-room schools in the state,

because her people do not live on scattered farms but in villages clustered in the fertile, irrigated valleys. Consolidation is, however, taking place among the schools of neighboring villages. Nebraska, Texas, Kansas, Tennessee, and Kentucky are making rapid progress in consolidation, and Idaho, Wyoming, Nevada, New Mexico, and Arizona have all made a beginning.

**The present status**

Summing up the entire situation, it is fair to say that rural America has crossed the border line and set foot into the realm of the mightiest movement in rural school improvement that has taken place in generations. According to Commissioner P. P. Claxton, the total number of consolidated schools of all kinds in February, 1917, was not less than 7500, over half of which had been established in the last three years. At the present rate of progress there will be not less than 10,000 such schools in 1920; but even that number will represent less than one fourth the number of consolidated schools that might be built by that time if the people could be made to realize the value and necessity of the change.

The growth of consolidation has already surpassed the wildest dreams of its stanchest friends, and in another decade the movement will sweep the country. Of all the plans, suggestions, and experiments proposed and tried to redirect, revitalize, revivify, reorganize, rebuild, and enrich the rural school to meet the educational demands of the twentieth-century farmer, the consolidated school stands supreme as the only complete and adequate method to meet that need. Every other scheme advanced has so far been swallowed up in the quicksands of twenty-five to thirty-five daily recitations and a maze of divers subjects in the one-room country school, from which only supermen and superwomen can extricate themselves.

Of course, there is, among each 500 or 1000 rural teachers, some genius of strength, energy, and ability who can surmount every obstacle and perform miracles in a one-teacher school in the face of every discouragement and weakness inherent in the system. But those who are prone to exalt such teachers and such schools should remember that these rare beings are not the criterion by which one can measure the average country teacher or the possibilities of the one-teacher school.

Nation-wide interest has been aroused in a small number of one-teacher schools because of the marvelous results achieved by a few masterful teachers like Marie Turner Harvey of the Porter School near Kirksville, Missouri, Miss Mabel Carney of Illinois fame, Herbert Quick's "Brown Mouse" schoolmaster of Iowa, and Harold Foght's "John Tracy," holding a rural community in the palm of his hand "somewhere in the Middle West." Besides these well-advertised and famous schools, there are other district schools, par excellence, in every state, which are so far in advance of the average in the matter of building, equipment, grounds, school spirit, and efficient service of able, consecrated teachers that they put the ordinary country school to shame. This is particularly true of the demonstration or model schools on the campus of the Kirksville, Missouri, Normal School and similar schools connected with the normal schools of other states, and to a less degree of those connected with high school training departments. They prove that rural communities can be awakened by extraordinary teachers to make extraordinary efforts and secure extraordinary results, especially under the stimulus of expert supervision and direction of the faculty of some normal school; but it is ridiculous to assert that they prove the efficiency of

The true meaning of certain unusually successful one-room schools

the one-room school or present a valid argument for a favorable comparison with consolidated schools.

Suppose that Mrs. Harvey, Miss Carney, "John Tracy," and their colleagues had been placed at the head of good consolidated schools operating under similar conditions as their one-room schools? Is it not reasonable to believe and expect that their genius and ability would have worked wonders in the consolidated schools and the larger rural communities, beside which the accomplishments in their one-teacher schools would have looked feeble indeed? The rural school must be made efficient without relying upon a few master teachers, for, at best, the Harveys, Carneys, and Tracys tarry but briefly in any country school, no matter what salary may be offered them. They are too much in demand as supervisors, heads of normal departments, state inspectors, etc., and pass on to the higher positions in the educational field which offer inducements that no rural school can duplicate; and when they, in turn, are followed by average teachers, the school transformed by the rare genius quickly reverts to the average condition of an average one-room school. Therefore, we must create conditions in the country school system which will make success possible for the average teacher of ability and enthusiasm, and not alone for the born genius. In no other way will country boys and girls get a square deal in education and farmers be given equal opportunities in life with people living in the city.

Granted that the preceding analysis of the "rural school problem" is correct, what shall be our attitude toward the small country school during the transition period? Common sense would dictate that where the prospect for a change is bright, the present buildings may serve a little longer unless they are a menace to the health and

**The transition from the one-teacher school**

comfort of children and teachers. Buildings unfit to house children should not be tolerated as public schools, no matter how great the cost to remedy the evil. The health of a single child is worth more than the price of a school building. Communities with poor one-room school buildings should make every effort to induce neighboring districts to consolidate with them, but if there is no prospect of success they should not hesitate to erect modern, sanitary, comfortable schoolhouses of the best type.

**Standardizing the one-room school**

A number of states have enacted laws directing the state departments, or other central authorities, to condemn unsanitary, inadequate, or unfit school buildings and to approve all plans and specifications of new ones. Others have prescribed state-wide regulations and conditions for standardizing both new and existing rural schools. Illinois and Oregon, neither of which has as yet done anything worth mentioning in the line of consolidation, have done excellent work in standardizing many of their one-room schools. A similar policy has been pursued by Oklahoma and several neighboring states, while Wisconsin and Minnesota have accomplished like results by granting state aid and by making such aid largely dependent upon improvements in buildings, equipment, and teaching force.

The state superintendent of Illinois has laid down the following twenty-nine points of excellence to be attained before a country school becomes a standard school:

### The Yard

1. Ample playground.
2. Good approaches to door and outhouses.
3. Convenient and serviceable fuel houses.

### The Schoolhouse

4. House well built, in good repair, including paint.
5. Good, tight foundation.
6. Attractive interior decorations.
7. Clean floors, walls, and furniture.
8. Good blackboards, some suitable for small children.
9. Two good cloakrooms. The one for girls should have one entrance only and that from the schoolroom.

### Furnishings and Supplies

10. Two good pictures. (See State Course.)
11. Good teacher's desk.
12. Good bookcase.
13. Good collection of juvenile books suitable as aids to school work as well as general reading.
14. Set of good, up-to-date maps.
15. Good globe.
16. Suitable dictionaries.
17. Thermometer.

### School Organization

18. School classified to do the work of the State Course of Study.
19. Classification and daily register well kept.
20. Definite program of study.
21. Program of recitation.
22. Pupils' reading circle.
23. At least seven months' continuous term.
24. Attendance regular.
25. Discipline: Instruction and spirit of the school good.

### The Teacher

26. Education: Equivalent to a high school course.
27. Salary not less than $40 per month.
28. Ranked by county superintendent as good or superior teacher in a scale of poor, fair, good, superior.

29. Must meet the county superintendent's requirements for professional interest and growth.

To be rated as a "superior school," the following additional requirements must be met:

1. At least one acre of school yard, neatly fenced, covered with a good sod and planted with trees, shrubs, and flowers, concrete walks to the entrance and to the closets.

2. A well or cistern equipped with a sanitary drinking fountain within doors.

3. Besides the schoolroom, there shall be a basement, work and play room, a cloakroom for each sex, and a library room.

4. The library shall contain at least eighty juvenile books, ten suitable for each grade, and a good school encyclopedia, suitable dictionaries, and a supply of the bulletins published by the National Government and the University of Illinois, useful in the school and in the community.

5. The pupils must be enrolled in the Illinois Pupils' Reading Circle and pursue the course of reading under the direction of the teacher and the county superintendent.

6. A manual-training bench and tools, equipment for sewing and for instruction in elementary agriculture. These subjects shall be taught to pupils prepared to receive such instruction.

7. There must be in operation a Parent-Teachers' Club which secures the hearty coöperation of the parents with the school.

8. When the teacher under whose administration the school was recognized as "superior" ceases to teach the school, it must be re-inspected to remain so recognized.

9. The teacher must hold a first-grade elementary school certificate, which is granted only to graduates of recognized normal schools or to those who have an equivalent preparation.

Before schools are accepted as standard or superior schools, a representative of the state department visits and inspects those recommended by the county superintendent, and if a school is found worthy of the recognition, a diploma of merit is issued by the state and a

neat metal plate is placed over the schoolhouse door. A school loses its rating upon neglect or failure to maintain the prescribed conditions. Out of 10,632 one-room country schools in Illinois, 2949 have already met the requirements for a standard school and sixteen for a superior school.

Oklahoma has a plan of listing the physical features of a school in minute detail, allowing from five to twenty-five points per item, and the various items are grouped under these heads: (1) grounds and outhouses; (2) the school building; (3) equipment; (4) organization. The total number of points possible is 1000, and schools are classified as "A," "B," or "C" class if they score between 90 and 100 per cent, 75 and 90 per cent, or 50 and 75 per cent of the points, respectively. The scoring is done, in the first instance, by the teacher, but is rechecked by the county superintendent, upon whose recommendation the state classifies the school and issues the proper diploma. The scheme has exerted a powerful influence upon the schools of the state.

Oregon's method of standardization is similar to that of Illinois.

Aside from the fact that a district may not always be able to secure the services of a teacher who measures up to the scale of "good" or "superior," there is no reason why the other points enumerated as requirements for a standard school should not be met in intelligent American rural communities of every state.

Considering the lack of professional supervision and direction, the range of subject matter, the number of classes and recitations, and the perplexing array of administrative problems a rural teacher has to meet each day, her training ought to be superior to that of any other elementary teacher. But the unsatisfactory physical and

social conditions surrounding the one-teacher school interpose and make this impossible. Because of this, a steady exodus of the most efficient rural teachers to the cities and towns has been in progress for more than a generation, and nothing but the establishment of graded, consolidated schools will check it. Not even unusually high salaries in the one-room schools will attract and hold the better class of teachers.

The teacher of the one-room school

In practice, the country has been compelled to accept as teachers those who could not meet the educational qualifications of school boards in the city or town schools. To make matters worse, most states have as yet inadequate facilities to give professional training to all new teachers and the town schools have absorbed nearly all the graduates of the normal schools and other training departments. Consequently, a large number of country teachers are poorly prepared for their arduous task. There is a noticeable improvement in the quality of the new recruits, however, in late years, and the time should soon be here when no one should be granted a state certificate, or allowed to teach the humblest public school, who has not graduated from a high school and taken the equivalent of at least a year's professional training under competent instruction. The results from this meager equipment will be poor enough.

Above all, those presuming to teach in the country school must be in sympathy with rural life, or disaster for school and teacher is sure to follow. While waiting for the dawn of a better day in the education of their respective neighborhoods, let all country teachers unite in support of a nation-wide program to raise the one-room school to its highest possible level.

As the closing chapter of this book is being written, the world is still in the throes of a mighty conflict. Hu-

manity is undergoing "the acid test" of unprecedented sacrifice in order to understand the new freedom and the call of universal brotherhood. Democracy is grappling with autocracy, and governments and nations are called before the judgment bar of the world to give an account of their deeds and their misdeeds.

The country life of to-morrow

How the new world-map will look when a durable peace has been concluded, no one is yet able to predict; but a changed social order is emerging from the chaos and beginning to loom up brighter and clearer each day. The millions of workers in office, factory, and field are stirred with a new feeling of responsibility and a new sense of power, born of concerted action in a common cause. Harmonious, national coöperation, on a gigantic scale, to cope with the financial situation after the war, is inevitable if the Ship of State is to weather the storm.

If the American farmer expects to play his part in this program of reconstruction and reform, he must provide an education for himself and his children that shall fit them both for the task. Never before in the country's history has the need for better training of the rural population been so urgent as today, and never before has the demand for a new rural school been so clearly defined.

Realizing the service and importance of the consolidated school, therefore, not only should the several states exert their strength in championing the cause of consolidation, but the Federal Bureau of Education should take immediate steps to organize a national force of experts and inaugurate a nation-wide campaign to further the movement. The farmers are entitled to a better education; justice to their children dictates it, and the welfare of the nation demands it.

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